











BEATRICE CENCI.



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# BEATRICE CENCI:

A HISTORICAL NOVEL OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

F. D. GUERRAZZI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN, BY

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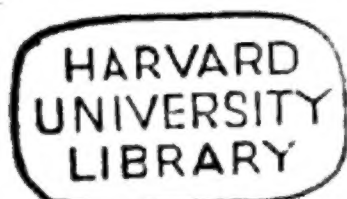
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TO  
THE HON. GEORGE LUNT,  
AS A  
TRIBUTE OF RESPECT AND GRATITUDE,  
This Translation  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,  
BY  
LUIGI MONTI.





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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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"Is there any literature in Italy, at the present time, worthy of the name?" That question was asked me by a man of letters, several years ago. This work of mine is an answer to it. It has caused me no little surprise to observe the utter ignorance of modern Italian literature in America, even among intelligent and educated scholars; and, although I have known many who are very conversant with the old Italian classics, yet I have rarely met with one, who was familiar with our modern ones. And, indeed, it is very much to be regretted, for Italy has always shone as a bright star in the Republic of Letters; and holds even now in her bosom men worthy of the country of poetry and of song.

Hence, it has been my constant aim, so far as I have been able, to introduce a knowledge of modern Italian literature. By my previous works (the Italian Grammar and Reader), I endeavored to facilitate the study of the language; now I present myself again to the indulgence of the American public, as the translator of a work by one of the greatest of contemporary Italian authors.

I feel very sensibly, however, my deficiencies, and the difficulty also of the task; for a good translation is, in itself a difficult and laborious work, and this difficulty is increased tenfold, when we con-

sider that it is done in a language foreign to the translator. Hence, I deem myself not presumptuous in asking the kind indulgence of the public.

Upon the favorable reception of this, my first attempt, depends my continuance in the same field of labor; for I propose to introduce other works of modern Italian authors, which are really worthy of being known, to the notice of the intelligent American community; and, at the same time, offer, in my exile, the only tribute of affection which I can, to my beloved and unhappy country.

LUIGI MONTI.

BOSTON, Nov. 1st, 1857.

## INTRODUCTION

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Amoroso ti versa a raccontare  
Questa storia di pianto, o pianto mio.  
ANFOSSI.

WHEN I first saw the image of Beatrice Cenci—which sorrowful tradition declares to have been painted by Guido Reni—in considering the arch of that most pure brow, those soft eyes, and the peaceful tranquillity of that divine countenance, I thought to myself: “Now, how is it possible that this angel-form should have contained a demon-soul? If the Creator manifests his conceptions by the beauty of created things, would he not have belied himself by uniting so much modesty of face with so much mental obliquity? Is God a man, to stoop even to falsehood? The Magi of the East, and the Sophists of Greece taught that God speaks in language of beauty. This prosaic age holds these doctrines as dreams, rained from heaven with the roses of dawn: I know it. Let the cold age keep its calculations, and leave us our imaginings; let it keep its skepticism which destroys; I love the pulsation of the heart which generates. Pioneer intellects illumine future times with a track of light; from them, the fates are not hidden; fixing their mental gaze upon the ocean of the infinite, they discover the far off centuries, as

the wary pilot perceives the sail in the distant horizon, where the sea mingles with the sky. For those divine dreams, what have you substituted, men of calculating hearts? You will say, "Truth!" Be it so; but the science with which you quench our thirst, is it the whole truth? Is it eternal, necessary, invincible, or is it not rather transient and changeable? No; the truths that debase the creature do not form its substance, any more than the clouds form part of heaven. Oh, young generations, to whom I appeal! Oh, beloved leaves of a tree, struck by the thunderbolt, but not reduced to ashes! May God grant you always to believe in the beautiful and the good—twin thoughts, born from His immortal mind—two sparks sent forth at the same moment from His infinite goodness—two vibrations struck from the same chord of the eternal lyre, which harmonizes creation."

Thus thinking, I undertook the task of searching through times past; I read the charges and the defences; I compared narratives, writings, and records; I listened to old tradition—tradition, which, when the Powerful write the history of innocence betrayed by blood, preserves the truth with the tears of the people, and as a lament, penetrates the hearts of distant descendants. I uncovered ancient sepulchres, and questioned the ashes. For even ashes speak when rightly questioned. In vain there appeared to my eyes men clothed in purple. I distinguished the color of the sea mollusk from the hue of blood, which, since Abel, cries for vengeance before God—alas! too often in vain. I knew the cause of the offence; and the very reason, which made common men believe in the crime (men accustomed to suppose that crime exists where the axe falls), convinced me of a sacrifice unique in the world. Then Beatrice appeared to me beautiful in misfortune; and turning to her disconsolate shade, I addressed it with affectionate words:

“Rise, unhappy one, from thy sepulchre of infamy, and show thyself as thou wast, angel of martyrdom. Long has the abhorrence of the people rested upon that innocent head of thine—innocent, yet decollated. Inasmuch as I have been able to comprehend thee, implore for me sufficient power to narrate worthily thy history to these dear Italian maidens, who love thee as a sister just departed, though the shadow of two centuries and a half is spread over thy sepulchre.

“Verily, thine is a history of atrocious crimes; but the maidens of my country will read it: it will pierce their gentle souls like a sword, but they will read it. When the youth whom they love is approaching, they will hasten, blushing, to hide it, but they will read it, and will offer thee the only gift that can be given to the betrayed—tears.”

# BEATRICE CENCI.

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## CHAPTER I.

FRANCESCO CENCI.

Per tutti i cerchi dello Inferno oscuri  
Spirto non vidi in Dio tanto superbo.

DANTE.

HE who might have endeavored to imitate with colors the group that stood awaiting Francesco Cenci in the hall of his palace, would have painted it, I know not if more charmingly, but certainly in the manner of the *Madonna della Seggiola* of Raphael. A woman, of perhaps twenty years, was seated near a large window, holding her child upon her bosom : behind her, a youth of noble bearing, his face bending down, looked upon this spectacle of love ; he clasped his hands, and raising them towards heaven, thanked God that so much happiness was given him. His aspect and attitude expressed how, in that moment, three affections, which make man divine, moved him. His hands were towards God, his look to his child, his smile to his wife. The woman, however, saw not the smile, for the duty and dignity of a mother absorbed her entirely. The child looked like an angel who had lost its way to heaven.



On the other side of the hall, a man lay stretched upon a bench, who might have furnished to Michelangelo the model of one of his famous twilights. He scarcely showed his face, which was hidden under a conical hat with a large rim. His beard was long, uncombed, and grey ; his skin like that which Jeremiah describes in the children of Zion, of an ashy color, like an oven floor. He was wrapped in a large cloak ; his legs crossed, and his feet covered with sandals, according to the fashion of the Roman peasant. Perhaps he was armed, but kept his weapon hidden ; as the Roman laws, after Pope Sixtus V., were very severe in such matters.

He who, in the midst of the hall, had paid attention first to the lovely family group, and then to the man, would have recalled the words of Scripture—"He divided darkness from light."

Two young cavaliers walked with unequal steps through the hall, exchanging words in loud or low tones. One had a red-spotted skin, like a leper ; from his black eyes, glittering through inflamed lids, shone forth fierceness, mingled with certain indications of mental wandering ; his hair straight, his teeth black ; while his flat nose and flaccid cheeks gave him the air of a hunting dog. His dress, although elegant, was disordered ; his voice came from his burnt lips impetuous and harsh ; his speech coarse ; his shoulders, arms, and head in continual and broken motion. Crime was there, like a wild beast, ready to burst forth at any instant.

The other, on the contrary, was pale and refined, with a large and well-arranged head of light hair ; slow and sad in his look and speech ; often distracted, sometimes sighing ; he would stop in his walk, start, and show his internal emotion by the trembling of his upper lip, and by the agitation of the hair of his moustache. His clothes, ribbons, laces of his collar and sleeves were most elegant. But whoever saw him would exclaim at once—"he is unhappy."

In a tunic, without cloak, like a magpie that flies unquiet and uneasily through the house, was a priest, moving here and there, taking the greatest pains to attract the attention of the bystanders to himself. He talked of the summer, the winter, of heat and cold, of seed-time and harvest ; but no one listened to him. Then he would ask if he could have the honor of speaking to his Excellency, the most noble Count, that day ; at what time he generally rose ; when he breakfasted ; if he were accustomed to spend a long time upon his toilet ; and if he gave audience every day. It was breath wasted ; no one answered him ; for the couple were absorbed in their own happiness ; the peasant seemed a bronze statue ; the gentleman with the red face had stared at him in such a manner as to make him shudder ; the one with the pale face looked upon him as a man fallen from the clouds. The poor priest knew not what to do ; in despair, he would now and then open his breviary and read ; but with the aspect of one who swallows bitter medicine ; his eyes would slowly steal down its pages ; one would have said that he had taken this book with him as the man who goes to drown himself carries a stone to tie to his neck. The face of the unfortunate priest, ordinarily of a pale yellow color, like the ends of wax candles which remain on the altar after service, had now become red with impatience ; that no one should listen to him gave him uneasiness ; and truly, he deserved to be noticed, if for nothing else but to wonder whether the tunic covering of his body was more ragged than the body covering of his soul ; both were worn out, old friends of each other, and both witnesses to the deepest regret of their master that nothing lasts in this world.

The curate (for this priest was properly a curate) after having experienced that the words of Scripture, " Knock and it shall be opened unto you," are not always verified, addressed himself for the third or fourth time to a certain *valet de chambre*

who seemed somewhat disposed to listen to him, when the cavalier of ugly bearing called with a haughty voice :

“ Cammillo !”

It is the nature of servants, that when they have no worse motive for bowing, they obey the commands of him who orders them the most proudly ; and Cammillo, although belonging to the vast family of servants, was certainly not an exception—and so, whirling suddenly, as if he had springs in his heels, he turned his back upon the poor priest, and bending lowly towards the cavalier, with the most obsequious voice replied :

“ Your Excellency ?”

“ Has it happened the most noble Count to sleep badly last night ?”

“ I do not know—I believe not. Several letters were brought to him early this morning, some from Spain, others from Naples—it may be, though I do not know, he is perusing them now.”

At this moment, an infernal barking deafened the ears of the bystanders : a little after, the doors of the Count’s room were suddenly opened, and a mastiff of enormous size came out, frightened and at the same time furious. The peasant lying near the door started to his feet instantly, and disentangling his arms from his cloak, drew a large poniard, ready to defend himself. The young mother pressed the child to her bosom, sheltering him with her arms. The father placed himself before his wife and child, in order to protect them by his own body. The cavaliers drew aside with decent haste, like those who wish neither to meet a danger nor show fear. The curate, however, ran for his life.

The dog, following his instinct, rushed upon the fugitive, seized him by the folds of his tunic, and tore it : worse he would have done, if two valets, running after him, had not held him firmly by the collar. The breviary had fallen to the ground. The poor priest screamed grievously, and in the same manner as

the Jew Shylock cried, "My daughter, my money," he exclaimed : " My cloak, my breviary." The irritated dog barked louder than ever. An old man then appeared on the threshold of the door.

This old man was Francesco Cenci.

Francesco Cenci, of Latin race, from the most ancient family *Cincia*, counted among his ancestors Pope John X., the famous paramour of the beautiful Theodora, through whose care he became first Bishop of Bologna, then of Ravenna, and finally Pope. As in age, so in crime, this family was old : for if history speaks the truth, Marozia, sister of Theodora, wishing to take away from her and her lover, the Pope, the dominion of Rome, treacherously occupied the Adrian fortress, and having invaded the Lateran with a large number of ruffians, put to the sword Peter, brother of John, and shut John himself in prison, where, either by poison or other means, he died. Tradition says that he was found a corpse in the bed of Theodora, where, as superstition imagines, the devil had strangled him in punishment for his crimes—a death worthy of such a life !

Francesco Cenci inherited an immense fortune ; his income was estimated at over a hundred thousand crowns, which in those times was an enormous sum, and even in our own would be no ordinary one. His father held the office of treasurer of the church under Pius V., and while the latter was trying to clear the world of heresies, the old Cenci was busy in clearing the public treasury of its crowns ; both well skilled in their different employments. As to Count Francesco, one hardly knew what to think of him, perhaps the reputation of no man differed more than his own. Some said that he was pious, liberal, mild and courteous ; others, on the contrary, called him avaricious, cruel, and wicked. The truth is, that in confirmation of both opinions proofs could be given. He had sustained several law processes, but had always come out absolved *ex capite innocentie* ; many, however, were not satisfied with such judgments, and complained

that the Roman Court was never known to condemn a man worth one hundred thousand dollars yearly. But, however mysterious his life might have appeared to the public, his family knew it but too well ; although through decency, and still more through fear, they dared not proffer a word. They understood how much he liked to imagine terrible deeds, and the more frightful and contrary to the opinions of others, so much the more pleasing to him ; and as soon as thought of, they were executed, and at any cost, even if in accomplishing them a treasure must be expended, or arson or homicide committed. His will was the flash, his deeds the stroke. He was accustomed (to such a point of audacity he had come) to keep an exact account of his expenditures in crimes ; and in a certain record book was found registered the following items : “ For the affairs and accidents of Toscanella, 3,500 sequins, and it was not dear. For the undertaking of the banditti of Terni, 2,000 sequins, and they were thrown away.” He always travelled on horseback, and alone ; when he thought the horse tired, he would dismount and buy another ; if they refused to sell him one, he took it, giving in exchange a blow with his poniard. No fear of banditti ever prevented him from traversing alone the dangerous forests of St. Germano or Faiola, and often, without stopping by the way, he might be seen going from Rome to Naples on horseback. Whenever he made his appearance in a place, either a rape, a fire, an assassination, or some other dreadful thing was sure to follow. He was strong in person, and skilled in all manner of manly exercises, so that he often provoked his enemies with insults and mockery ; but of these he had few acknowledged ones, for he was much feared, and before compromising themselves with him, they would think twice. He always kept at his own expense a company of *bravi*.\* The court-yard of his palace

\* Men whose profession it was to protect the person of their master, and also to aid him in all his evil designs.



offered an infamous asylum to all manner of banditti. Among the fierce Roman barons he was the most brutal.

Pope Sixtus V., who was Pontiff (and might also have been the executioner) of Rome, invited on a certain occasion to the Vatican the Orsinis, Colonnas, Savellis, Count Cenci, and others of the proudest Roman nobles ; after having entertained them with pleasant conversation, he approached the open balconies, and from thence turning his eyes upon the city beneath, said to the bystanders : " Either my eyesight has become dim, as in old age it is wont to be, or the bastions of your most noble lordships' palaces are decorated with strange ornaments this morning ; go and look, and for courtesy let me know what it is."

They were the corpses of the banditti who dwelt in these palaces, hanging therefrom. The Pope had ordered that they should all be hung without mercy, from the cornices of the buildings.

Francesco Cenci, through these and other events, knowing well the nature of the Pope, thought proper to retire to a distance ; and while the Pope lived, remained at his castle of Rocca Petrella, otherwise called Rocca Ribalda. The snake had found a file to bite.

In person, he was very stout, and although somewhat advanced in years, still in a robust state of health, excepting he limped ; for his right leg had been hurt. Rich in ideas, eloquent in speech, he might have acquired the fame of a splendid orator, if the times and his tongue would have permitted ; for on the slightest agitation the latter seemed to be entangled in his teeth, and the voice would come out like water breaking upon rocks. He certainly could not be called ugly ; and yet his expression was so sinister that it could never inspire love, sometimes it inspired reverence, but more often fear. If you except the color of his hair and beard, changed from black

to white, if a wrinkle more, a greater paleness, and a complexion more yellow and bilious, his face was the same as that of his youth. His forehead, when not disturbed, appeared marked, not with such deep wrinkles as remorse or care is accustomed to impress, but soft and light as Love hesitatingly marks with the extreme tip of his wings upon the head of decaying beauty. His eyes, ordinarily sad, were a dull grey, entirely deprived of brilliancy, surrounded by circles of an ashy color, and lined with veins of violet and red ; they seemed corpses within leaden coffins. His mouth was small, and lost among the wrinkles of his cheeks. His face would have been equally adapted for that of a saint or a bandit ; deep inexplicable as that of a sphinx, or like the fame of Count Cenci himself. Having described sufficiently his person and manners, I will endeavor later to give a psychological study of this prodigious man.

The Count had retired early to his apartments the evening before, without saluting his wife or children. To Marzio, who had offered his usual services, he had replied :

“Go ; Nero is enough for me.”

Nero was an enormous dog, and fierce. Cenci had named him thus less in memory of that bloody tyrant, than to signify in the old Samnite’s language strong or powerful.

Hardly had he gone to his bed, ere he began to turn on each side and groan with impatience ; by degrees his impatience became fury, and he began to rave. Nero replied by growling. A little after, the Count starting from the heated bed, exclaimed :

“Perhaps the sheets are poisoned ! I have read somewhere of this having formerly been done. Olimpia ! Ah ! you have escaped from me, but I will reach you ; no one can escape from my hands—not one. What a silence there is around me ! What peace in my house ? Do all rest ? Then do *I* not frighten them ? Marzio !”

The valet, at the call answered immediately.

"Marzio," said the Count, "what are the family doing?"

"They sleep."

"All?"

"All: at least I may judge so, as all seems quiet in the house."

"And when I can't sleep, dares any one to slumber in my house? Go, see if they really sleep; listen in the rooms, particularly in Virgilio's; bolt them softly on the outside, and return."

Marzio disappeared.

"This fellow," continued the Count, "I detest above all others; under that surface of icy mildness, the waters of rebellion run no less swift: reptile without a tongue, not however without poison. How I long to see you dead!"

Marzio, returning, said:

"They all sleep, even Don Virgilio; but from their feverish breathing, a weary sleep."

"Have you bolted the doors on the outside?"

Marzio nodded an affirmative.

"Very well: take this arquebuse, fire it near the door of the room of Virgilio, and then cry with your loudest voice—fire! fire! Thus will I teach them to sleep while I watch."

"Your Excellency"——

"What is the matter?"

"I will not say: have pity for the boy, who seems very ill."

"Go on——"

"But it will raise the neighborhood."

The Count, without being in the least disturbed, putting his hand quietly under his pillow, drew out a pistol, and suddenly levelling it at the valet, who turned pale with fear, with low voice said to him:



“ Marzio, the next time you attempt to contradict me instead of obeying, I will kill you as I would a dog—go !”

Marzio in haste went to execute the command.

It is impossible to describe with what terror the women and child awoke. They jumped from their beds, and rushed to the doors ; and, not being able to open them, screamed, praying some one to tell them what had happened, and to open the doors for God’s sake, to free them from their terrible anxiety. But no answer came : exhausted, they threw themselves again on their beds, laboring under a painful sleep.

Two hours after, the Count called his valet again, and asked him :

“ Is it day yet ?”

“ No, your Excellency.”

“ Why is it not day ?”

Marzio shrugged his shoulders. The Count shaking his head, as if laughing to himself for asking the strange question, continued :

“ How long before dawn ?”

“ One hour.”

“ One hour ? but one hour is a century, an eternity for him who cannot sleep. Oh my——! I was about to add—God. They say sleep is a friend of the Saints ; if so, I ought to sleep as much as the Seven Sleepers together ! What to do now ! Ah ! we will spend the night in some meritorious work ;—let us educate Nero.”

He then ordered Marzio to take a certain figure of straw, and carry it into the hall where the rooms of the women opened. He then took Nero into another room, and there, inciting and enraging him, suddenly opened the door and set him on the straw figure. The dog, blind with rage, rushed towards the figure, tearing it and barking desperately. The Count derived wonderful enjoyment in looking at the prowess of the wild beast, and said to Marzio, who was near him :

“This is the son of my choice, as the voice in Jordan said ; and I shall educate him, God willing, to defend me from my enemies, and even from my friends ; particularly too from my most beloved children ; from my still more beloved wife ; and even a little from you,” and he slapped the shoulder of the valet, “my most faithful Marzio.”

Thus having filled his house with terror, he returned to his chamber, where nature, conquered by weariness, forced him to a short and broken sleep. When he arose, he appeared gloomy.

“I have slept badly, Marzio—I dreamed I was sitting at table with my dead ancestors. This signifies approaching death. Before, however, I go to dine there, many others, Marzio, many others shall precede me to prepare the table.”

“Your Excellency, letters have arrived by express couriers from the Neapolitan State.”

The Count reached out his hand to receive them. Marzio continued :

“And also from Spain by the usual courier ; I have placed them all upon the desk in your study.”

“It is well :—We will go.”

And supported by Marzio, and accompanied by Nero, he went to his study.

A magnificent August sun just tinged with its dawning rays the azure heavens. The only glory, since our degradation has taken away from us even that which it seemed impossible to lose—the feeling of our own abasement. Oh God ! how great must be our sins and thy anger, since neither tears, nor blood, nor anything is able to fertilize a flower of virtue upon this soil !

The Count approached the balcony, and, gazing upon the majestic luminary, murmured words to himself. Marzio, charmed with the beauty of the heavens and the light, could not help exclaiming :

“Divine Sun !”

At these words the eyes of the Count, usually so dead, flashed forth like lightning from a cloud, and he turned them towards the heavens. If it is true that the Apostate Julian threw to heaven the blood which issued from his mortal wound, he must have hurled it with the same look and intention.

“Marzio, if the sun was a light, which, by blowing, could be extinguished, would you put it out?”

“I? your Excellency, it seems to me I should leave it burning.”

“*I would extinguish it.*”

Caligula wished the Roman people had but one neck, that he might kill them with one blow. Count Cenci wished to crush the sun. Poor clay! If the sun should approach, the ashes of the earth would not occupy any space in the universe.

He sat at his desk; opened and read one, two, three letters, quietly at first, then hastily; finally, after finishing them all, he broke forth with a horrible oath:

“All are happy! Heaven! you do it almost to spite me!”

And closing his hand, brought it down with all his strength: it chanced to strike Nero on his head, who with raised mouth and quick eyes followed every movement of his master. The dog gave a furious start, then rushed against the door, burst it open and fled growling. The Count, calling him, followed after, not without first observing with a bitter smile:

“You see, Marzio, if he had been my son he would have bitten me.”

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PARRICIDE.

——Tutta la Calna

Potrai cercare, e non troverai ombra

Degna più di esser messa in gelatina.

DANTE, *Inferno*.

MARZIO invited the cavalier with the red face to pass into the Count's study. The Count awaited him standing ; and as soon as he saw him, with a refined and elegant manner, saluted him, saying :

“ Welcome, Prince ; of what service can we be to your lordship ?”

“ Count, I must speak with you ; but here is one too many.”

“ Marzio, retire.”

Marzio, bowing, went out. The Prince followed him in order to assure himself that he had carefully shut the door ; he then drew the curtain and approached the Count, who, wondering not a little at these precautions, invited him to sit down, and, without saying a word, waited to hear him.

“ Count, like Catiline, now I will begin my oration *ex abrupto*. Therefore I tell you at once that, considering you deservedly a man of courage and counsel, strong in mind and arm, I turn to you for both, and hope you will courteously aid me with both.”

“ Speak, Prince.”

"My shameless mother," he began, with a low voice, "stains with despicable acts my house and even your own, by the tie of relationship which exists between our two families. Age, instead of extinguishing her passions, causes them to burn more fiercely. The large revenue which she possesses, by the disposition of my stupid father, she squanders among her lovers. Through Rome pasquinades may be continually seen. I see mockery painted upon the faces of the people ; wherever I go terms of reproach wound me—my blood boils in my veins ; to such a degree has the evil reached that there is no remedy, save one. Now, tell me, Count, what you counsel me to do?"

"The illustrious Lady Costanza di Santa Croce ! Can you think so ? Come, if you do this for a joke, I advise you to take a more suitable subject for it ; if, however, you speak the truth, then, my son, I warn you not to let yourself be taken by temptations of the devil, who, as the father of lies, disturbs the mind with false fancies."

"Count, let us leave the devil in his own house. I can show you manifest proofs, and by far too shameful ones."

"Let us know them."

"Listen. She leaves me, if I may say so, drowned in penury, while with the income of the family she brings up servants and valets, and a crowd of their children, who have made nests in the palace more numerous than swallows ; she banishes me from her presence ; does not even wish to hear my name—I, Count, you understand, who never would have given a single thought to her affairs if she had borne herself as a worthy mother should towards a dutiful son—and, to tell you all in a word, she last evening drove me from the house—my own palace—the dwelling of my illustrious ancestors."

"Go on ; is there anything else ?"

"And is not that enough ?"

"It is too much even ; and truly, to confess it to you in

secret, I have noticed for a long time that the Princess Costanza, God pardon her, cherishes for you a natural aversion. About eight days ago she spoke a long time to me about you."

"Indeed ; and what did this miserable woman say of me ?"

"To add fuel to the fire is not a Christian act ; therefore I am silent."

"In this case, Count, the fire kindled by your words is so great that you can add but little ; and this you may easily understand by your own judgment."

"Too well ; and besides, silence is grievous to me, since my words will serve as a guide for you, and prevent your getting into trouble. The Lady Costanza expressly declared, in the presence of several distinguished prelates and Roman barons, that you would be a disgrace to the family ; that you were a thief—a murderer—and, above all, a liar."

"She said that ?" and the voice of Santa Croce trembled, and his face had become like a burning coal through rage.

"And she also said that you was a most miserable spendthrift of all your property ; that you had borrowed money at great usury from the Jews, securing it upon the palace of your illustrious ancestors, from which she was obliged to free it with her own money, in order to avoid the shame of dwelling elsewhere ; that she had many times paid your debts, and that every day you contracted newer and heavier ones, and more disgraceful than ever ; that you are a desperate gambler ; and in every vice you have plunged deeply ; a scorner of God and of all human respect. And, lastly, to put a climax to your brutality, that you were in the habit of becoming so intoxicated with wine and ardent spirits, that many times you were brought home upon a litter, disfigured in person."

"She said so ?"

"And the immorality of your life had reached to such a point, that reverence to your mother or respect for your home



had not prevented you from bringing to the palace of your ancestors infamous women ; together with many other depravities, which only to remember makes my cheeks burn."

" My mother ?"

" And she also added, that she believed you incapable of reform ; and although it grieved her maternal heart, she has decided to have recourse to his Holiness, that he might imprison you in the castle—to make a visit to the Emperor Adrian. On the word of a gentleman, this is being in prison with the best of company."

" She said thus ?" continued to interrupt the Prince, with a choking voice, while the Count replied with the same malignant and irritating voice :

" Or at Civita Castellana—for life."

" For life ! Did she really say for life ?"

" And soon ; this being due to the honored memory of her illustrious husband, to the reputation of the ancient family, to her noble relations, her own conscience, and to God."

" Excellent mother ! Have not I a good mother ?" exclaimed the Prince with a voice which he endeavored to render mocking, although he could ill hide his unusual terror. " And the prelates, what did they answer ?"

" Eh ! you know the precepts of the Gospel ? The tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down—and they repeated it with as amiable a tone as if inviting you to drink a cup of chocolate."

" The affair is more pressing than I had thought. Now, Count, give me some counsel—I am but poor in expedients—I am in despair."

The Count, shaking his head, replied with grave voice :

" Here, where flows the fountain of all grace, you may dip with full buckets. Go to my Lord Taverna, Governor of Rome, or if you have much money and little wisdom, to the eminent

lawyer, Signor Prospero Farinaccio, who will devour you with costs."

"Alas ! I have no money."

"Certainly without money you might as well address yourself to the colossus of Monte Cavallo."

"And then the affair would become public, and I need remedies which make no noise, and, above all, hasty ones."

"And then bow yourself to the most blessed feet, for remember that in the body of the Holy Father every limb is blessed, and hence the feet *et reliqua* of the Pontiff : they call him *insignis pietatis vir*, as Virgil sings of Æneas."

"Lord have mercy on us ! Pope Adobrandino was born at the same time with the she wolf of Dante, who after eating is more hungry than before. Old, avaricious and obstinate, worse than any mule of the Marches ; so greedy of money to enrich his relations, as even to try to skin the Colosseum. Before going to him, I would throw myself headlong into the Tiber."

"Yes," ceasing his slight ironic smile, the count continued to say, disturbed ; "yes, now I think of it, you would throw away your time and trouble. After the sad fault of having given favor to my rebellious daughter against me, he will have become more obstinate in listening to complaints of children against their parents. Whoever wishes to keep intact his authority, either spiritual or legal, must studiously preserve parental authority. All authority is derived from one common principle ; you cannot offend one without injury to the other. A father and a king are never in the wrong ; children and subjects never in the right. From whence do they derive the right of complaining, from whence the audacity of rebelling ? They live because their father begat them ; they live because their king allows them. Look at Iphigenia and Isaac, these are examples of right subjection in children ; as Agamemon, Abraham, and Japhet, of the entirety of paternal power. Rome kept herself powerful while



the father had the right of life and death over his family. These laws of the twelve tables were indeed a blessed invention! By them what did the family represent? The community of the wife, children and slaves placed under absolute dominion of the father. Those were golden ages for Rome, who ever may deny it, when they could sell their bleeding children."

"Then?" asked Santa Croce, astonished at this unexpected rebuff, letting his arms fall in despair. Count Cenci, repenting of not being able to repress the outbreak of his mind, hastened to reply:

"Oh! for you it is a different thing."

Santa Croce, comforted by these words, and more by the paternal look which the Count turned upon him, drew his chair nearer, and, leaning his head forward, whispered in the Count's ear:

"I have heard it said"—and then stopped; but the Count, in a jesting manner, as if imitating the phrases of confessors, encouraged him by saying:

"Go on, my son, go on!"

"I had ever believed, Count, that you, as a discreet and very prudent man, had always succeeded—when any one troubled you, in taking them out of your path with wonderful ease. Well skilled in natural sciences, you cannot be ignorant of the virtue of certain herbs, which send one to the region of the dead without changing horses; and what is the most important, without leaving the mark of the wheels upon the road."

"The virtues of herbs are wonderful; but of what avail they can be to you, I cannot clearly comprehend."

"As regards this you must know, that the illustrious Princess Costanza is accustomed to take a little milk every evening to make her sleep."

"Well."

"You can understand, the difficulty only lies whether it shall

be a short or a long sleep—a dactyle or a spondee—a mere nothing in fact, simple prosody;” and the villain endeavored to smile.

“*Misericordia Domini super nos!* A parricide for a mere beginning; it would be a good move! Unhappy man! and can you think of it? Honor thy father and thy mother! And there is no disputing that, since it was said by him who could say it upon Sinai.”

The Prince, pretending firmness, replied:

“As for thinking of it, rest assured, for I have thought of it a thousand times; as to its being a mere beginning, I wish you to know that this is by no means the first race I have run.”

“I believe it without your swearing to it; but come nearer and let us reason seriously. The art of making poisons is no more in vogue as formerly; we have lost the knowledge of the greater part of those powerful poisons known to our virtuous fathers. The Princes Medici of Florence have labored in a praiseworthy manner about this most important branch of human science; but, if we consider the expense, with but little profit. Here, as elsewhere, runs the invitation of the devil: *de malo in pejus venite adoremus*. There is the water *tophana*; good for nothing for a work properly done—the hair falls off, the nails are loosened, the teeth decay, the skin crumbles to pieces, and the whole body is filled with livid ulcers; so that, you see, it leaves behind too manifest and lasting traces. Alexander VI., of good memory, used it often, but he did not care if traces were left behind or not. For my part, I agree with Alexander the Great—with steel one cuts neatly every Gordian knot, and at once.

“What! the steel? And does not that leave any trace behind?”

“There was once a king called Edward the II., who having a son of his own, as loving as yourself, had his bowels pierced

and burnt by his order, without leaving a trace behind. In fact a curious invention! But who advises you to keep secret the death of Lady Costanza? You ought rather to proclaim it, and call yourself openly the author."

"Count, you jest!"

"I do not jest; I speak rather with the best wisdom in the world. Have you never read histories, at least the Roman? Certainly you have. Very well; of what use is it to read books unless you derive instruction to appear well in the world? Remember the threat of Tarquin to Lucretia; he, provided the wife of Collatin did not assent to him, declared he would kill her, and then place by her side a dead slave, asserting that he had surprised her with him, and killed her as a just punishment for the offence done to his relative, and in revenge for the sacred majesty of the laws; with a great many other words which honest men are accustomed to use. Thus you, neither more nor less, ought to try to surprise the princess with some one of her lovers, and kill them both. The gravity of the offence excuses the deed; in the Code (I do not exactly remember the page, but look and you will find it) there must be laws which in this case exculpate the crime."

"But," replied the Prince, visibly embarrassed, "I do not know, really, whether she takes her lovers into her room."

"And where do you suppose she takes them?"

"And then to surprise them at the right moment—it will be impossible."

"Why so? Foxes are always taken in the trap."

"No; I will not, although able, put myself to the risk of doing the thing openly."

"Say, rather," interrupted the Count, with a malignant smile, "say, rather, that the lovers of a woman of sixty you have conjured in your imagination for the purpose of finding in others the faults which may excuse your own: say, also, that the reason

which urges you, is the desire that the annuity of your mother should cease ; nor do I blame you for this, since I know how fathers eternally crucify their sons, if not with nails, at least with debts. The blame which I do attach to you is, that you have wished to make a fool of a poor old man, and play the sharper with me."

"Lord Count, in truth I swear to you"—

"Silence with your oaths ; I believe or not ; and oaths, in my idea, are like supports to buildings, sure signs of weakness ; hence, without oaths, I do not believe you ; still less with them."

"Come ! do not abandon me !" And he said this so humbly, that Cenci, having shaken to his satisfaction this bag of bad flour, and wishing to cut short the conversation, deridingly replied :

"O dignitosa coscienza e netta,  
Come ti è picciol fallo amaro morso !"

Come, take courage ; *Minor vergogna, maggior colpa lava*. However, to tell the truth, I cannot give you suitable counsel. I remember to have read some time ago, in a certain case somewhat similar to yours, that the following method was put into execution. In the night, a ladder was placed at the window of the bed-room of the person or persons that were to be murdered ; some gold and silver ornaments, and other articles of value, were then stolen and carefully destroyed, in order to give color to the thing, and have it understood that the homicide was committed for the sake of the theft ; finally, the window was left open, that it might be supposed the robbers fled from thence. In such manner all suspicions were removed from the person to whom this death proved most useful ; and the heir had the reputation of being a good Christian, by ordering a magnificent funeral and a large number of masses. He did not even stop there, but wished also to acquire the name of being a rigid avenger of blood ; insti-

gating justice to make the most diligent search ; and lamenting the sluggishness of the court, and even promising a reward of twenty thousand ducats to the secret or open denunciator of the guilty person. Thus our excellent fathers had the good fortune of enjoying in their time the riches of the dead in holy peace."

" Ah !" striking his forehead with his hand, exclaimed Santa Croce, " you have truly a great mind, Count ! I profess everlasting gratitude to you. This is exactly what suits my case. But this is not all ; you would put a climax to your benevolence and my gratitude, if you would kindly call from Rocca Petrella one of those brave fellows to whom you give the charge of such affairs."

" What affairs ? of what persons are you talking ? The knot is yours ; and it is your business to find the thread to loosen it ; but mind, lest the thread should cut your fingers. We have not seen each other, and we shall never see each other again. Henceforth I wash my hands of it, like Pilate. Farewell, Don Paolo. That which I can do for you, and what I will do, will be to beseech Heaven, in my prayers, to assist you."

The Count rose to dismiss the Prince ; and while with courteous manners, he accompanied him to the door, he was thinking within himself : " And there are people who maintain that I do not benefit my neighbors ! Calumniators ! Slanderers ! It is impossible to do more than I do. Let us see, now, how many are about to gain by me. The undertaker, *in primis* ; then the priests, whom I love so ; then come the poets for the elegy ; the preacher for the funeral oration ; then master Alessandro, the executioner ; and, finally, the devil, if there is one." Meanwhile, having come to the door, the Count opened it, and taking leave of the Prince with his usual suavity of manner, added, in a fatherly voice :

" Good-bye, Don Paolo, and may God keep you in his holy peace."

The curate, hearing these words, murmured in a low voice :

“ What a worthy gentleman ! One can plainly see that his words come from his heart.”



## CHAPTER III.

### THE ABDUCTION.

*Ma tutto è indarno ; chè fermata e certa  
Piuttosto era a morir, ch' a satisfarli.  
Piochè ogni priego, ogni lusinga esperta  
Ebbe e minacce, e non potean giovarli ;  
Ei ridusse alla forza a faccia aperta.*

ARIOSTO.

THE Count looked into the antechamber, and beckoning to the other gentleman, said :

“ My Lord Duke, at your pleasure.”

The pale young man entered the chamber like one bewildered ; the courteous invitation to be seated either he did not hear, or did not wish to accept. But as if having been seized by a vertigo, he leaned with one hand upon the desk, and gave vent to a profound sigh, which seemed to come from the bottom of his heart.

“ What sighs, what pains are these ?” asked the Count with flattering voice. “ How is it possible at your age to find time to make yourself unhappy ?”

And the Duke, with a voice which seemed like the soft murmur of water, replied :

“ I am in love.”

The Count to cheer him, playfully added :

“ It is your season, my son, and you do perfectly right to love with all your soul ; and with all your body. If you, young and handsome, could not love, who should ? I, perhaps ? You see years have sprinkled snow upon my hair, and have bound my heart with ice. To you both heaven and earth speak of



love ; from all nature a voice comes to you which counsels to love :

'Le acque parlan d'amore, e l'ora, e i rami,  
E gli, angelletti, e i pesci, e i fiori, e l'erba  
Tutti insieme pregando ch'lo sempre ami.'

So sung the sweet lips of Francesco Petrarca. Come, cheer up, young man ; is this a thing to be ashamed of ? Preach it from the pulpit, proclaim it from the roofs ; for love is good news. Petrarch, who was a grave man, and a canon of the church, was not ashamed to confess how love had enslaved him twenty-one years for Laura while she was alive, and ten years more after she had taken her flight to heaven. Mercy upon us ! That was love which shames the oaks. Nor was he satisfied with having sung his love in a thousand rhymes : for in his declining years he wished he had made them

'In numbers more often, in style more rare.'

To St. Theresa much was pardoned because she loved much ; and some say even too much ; this same saint called the devil unhappy, and do you know why ? Because he cannot love. Therefore, love *totis viribus* ; for doing otherwise you offend Nature, who is, as you know, the first born of God."

The young man, covering his face with both hands, and giving vent to a deep sigh, exclaimed :

"Ah ! mine is a desperate love."

"Don't say that, for the gates of hell even are not without hope. Let us reason together. You have, perhaps, fallen in love with somebody's wife. Be warned, then we should indeed meet with an impediment ; two, rather : in the first place the husband, then the commandment. When God promulgated his laws on Sinai, it seems he must have been thoroughly incensed against his daughter Nature ; since, to speak between ourselves, neither more nor worse could her desire have been opposed.

Nevertheless, be comforted with this ; what the commandment forbids the heart permits.

“No, my dear Count, mine is an honest love.”

“Then marry her *in facie Ecclesiæ*, with all due ceremonies, according to the *sacrosanctum Concilium Tridentinum*, and do not come” ——

“God knows I would gladly do it ; but, alas ! so much happiness is forbidden me.”

“Then don’t marry her.”

“The woman I love is of lower birth than I would wish ; but if her beautiful form, or rather the greatness of her soul be considered, she is worthy of an empire.”

“Royal soul, worthy of empire, the same Petrarch has said ; and if so, you had better marry her.”

“Cold ashes and shadows ! This love will dwell eternally in me.”

“How long will this eternity last ? In women, according to the most accurate calculation, the eternity of love lasts an entire week ; in some, but rarely, it is prolonged until perhaps the second Monday, and that is all.”

The young man, although so engrossed with this love of his, could not help noticing the sneering manner in which Don Francesco spoke to him, and blushing with shame and anger, replied :

“Sir, you do me wrong ; I hoped to find advice. I deceived myself ; excuse me ;” and made a motion as if to depart. But the Count detaining him, said gently :

“Please to remain, Duke ; I spoke thus merely to try you ; I see now how truly vehement and fatal a passion burns within you. Unburden your heart to mine ; I shall know how to pity you, and being able, perhaps help you. I have buried my loves ; sixty years and more have associated them with the grave, and sung their *miserere*, for me love is a memory, to you a hope ; for me ashes, to you a rose that blooms ; but still I nourish

within sparks of the ancient flame, and reasoning with myself, I can repeat the lines of Petrarch :

‘Ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,  
Spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.’

*Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco*, as Dido said to Æneas, who came from Troy to build Rome for the greater glory of the Popes in general, and for Clement VIII. in particular.”

Count Cenci, in spite of his protest, sneered ; but it would have been impossible to judge whether he spoke in earnest or joked, since he appeared so grave ; he only half closed his eyes, the orbits of which appeared wrinkled like a fishing net ; his eyelids trembled continually ; he smiled with his eyes the smile of a viper.

“The girl whom I love lives in the house of the Falconieris. What her lineage may be I know not, but although she is treated as a relative, she belongs to a servile condition. Alas ! since I first saw her at the church of Gesù, adorned with her beauty and modesty, I have lost my sleep ; every other woman appears low and common to me.

“Speak in a low tone, if you please, Duke : woe to you if our proud Roman ladies should hear you. They would make of you a second edition of Orpheus torn to pieces by the Bacchantis, with notes and appendix.”

“Supposing her an easy conquest,” continued the young man impassionedly, “(and God knows how much remorse it has caused me),” I left untried no means to succeed in my desires. Alas ! miserable that I am ! I fear lest these proposals might have offended her, and perhaps she now hates me,” and here he paused, afraid of sighing ; then, with lower tone, continued : “how repulsive these dishonest propositions must have sounded in the ears of that virtuous girl.”

And the Count, staring at him in astonishment, thought : “I never saw a more simple fellow.”

“The Falconieris,” continued the Duke, “have caused me

to understand that I should cease passing under their palace windows, since the girl is such that I cannot marry her, nor can she consent to be my mistress."

"And you, then?"

"I chose to ask her in marriage."

"There is no remedy : I should have done the same."

"My relatives, as soon as they heard of my intention, rose in a fury against me, as if I were about to commit a sacrilege ; asked me to consider the offence to their blood, and the dishonor done to the nobility of their house. The disdain of my kindred, the rage of my companions, and with a thousand of such deviltries they have so worried my brains, that I am almost in despair."

"Eh ! it is a serious affair ; and I should have said the same."

"But, when Adam delv'd and Eve span, where was then the gentleman ?"

"Truly ; where was he ? For my part, I cannot tell."

"I wish it could be shown in what way we gentlemen differ from the common people. Perhaps the rain does not wet, nor the sun warm us ; perhaps troubles do not assail us ; our cradle is not girded with cries, our death-bed besieged by tears. Can we say to Death, as to an importunate creditor, 'Return to-morrow ?' Can we sleep our last sleep better under a marble sepulchre, than the people do under the sod ? I wish it could be seen if worms, before coming to gnaw the body of a pope or an emperor, take their hats off, saying, 'by your leave, your holiness ;' 'by your leave, your majesty ?' Does my dukedom sow or reap happiness ; does not love level all difference among lovers ?"

"It is so ; 'Love levels all distinctions,' says the poet. Something like it sung with his accustomed elegance Torquato Tasso in his sylvan fable—do you recollect it, duke ?"

"*Dio mio !* What do you wish me to recollect ? I have

no memory, no mind, no anything more. For pity's sake, my dear Count, you who have so much wisdom and experience of the world, be kind enough to give me a remedy for this evil."

"My dear," said the Count, placing his hand familiarly upon the shoulder of the Duke, "listen to me, you are right."

"Yes?"

"And neither are your relatives wrong. You are right since the smoke of nobility is not worth the smoke of a pipe. Your relatives are not wrong, for they see as well as I do, the artifice of a woman in this affair, who, by her natural disposition, or by the suggestions of others, plays a game with you. Do not be angry, Duke, you came to consult the oracle, and its responses must be heard, although unpleasant. That which seems to you a sincere resistance, appears to me a studied repulse, with the idea that obstacles irritate the passions. The more a thing is forbidden, the more it creates desire, and thus the woman calculates upon the ardor of your passion, to bring you where she wishes. In short, it appears the net is evidently stretched to draw profit from the flame which burns within you. To love is human; to allow ourselves to be conquered by blind passion belongs to brutes. When I was young, and gave my mind to such things, people were not so particular. A gentleman like you, when he took a fancy to some plebeian beauty, could persuade her with money to his pleasure. If she denied him, and this I can assure you, happened very seldom, at least in my times, he would have her by force. If the friends barked, he would throw a handful of money in their throats and silence them; for the plebeians bark like Cerberus, in order to have food. When the woman became troublesome, and this happened often, with a little dowry, one could get her married; nor were chances wanting; for I do not see how these people in yielding to the wishes of a gentleman, degrade themselves; neither do



women's lips after being kissed, lose their beauty, but are renewed like the moon."

The Duke made a gesture of horror. The Count, unmoved, kept on :

"No, my son; do not despise the advice of the old. I have seen more of the world than you have, and I know how these affairs usually end. Mark me, if you please; I will propose to you a fine way, and one sure of success. First, you must get possession of the girl; and here stands the whole, or indeed, the greater part, you must acknowledge. Then, if she turns out to be a Clelia, a Virginia, or a Penthesilea, then marry her in holy peace, and there is an end. But if you can avoid this rock of matrimony, do so by all means; since matrimony is in truth the grave of love; holy water extinguishes it. The yes which you pronounce is the feeble cry of Hymen, and at the same time the last sigh of love in agony. Matrimony is born of love, like vinegar from wine; beside you will escape the indignation of your relatives, and the gossip of the world, which is no little gain. You may call these the stings of gnats, and I grant it you; but when gnats attack you by thousands they are apt to make you scream by their small, but bitter sting, which unpleasantness a discreet man ought always, if he can, to avoid.

"No, Count, no; rather would I thrust a dagger in my heart."

"Softly to desperate steps; we can always have time to throw ourselves away. Before taking misfortune for a medicine, consider well the business; you may see that my proposal presents two views, and at the same time two ways of solving them. You, with your sound judgment, may govern yourself according to circumstances."

"But if the girl should hate me?"

"You recollect the spear of Achilles. It healed the wound it made; so love heals the wound of love; and beauty is easy

in forgiving sins done for its sake. She will pardon you ; do not be afraid ; she will pardon you ; or is the world now to begin going backwards ? Don't try to fall into the net like a bird. Women, more than you imagine, often show themselves warlike so as to prove the valor of a lover. In Sparta, if a husband wished to get a wife, he had to steal her ; nor do I remember any historian who says that the wife was displeased by it. Did not Ersilia perhaps love Romulus ? Ought we Romans, who are descended from the stolen Sabines, to be afraid of an abduction ?”

The young man, confused and perplexed by such reasoning, felt as if dragged over a slippery ground. Desire always travels with her pockets filled with cotton, in order to stuff the ears of conscience so as not to feel her sting. In the frenzy of his passion, the youth unthinkingly replied :

“ And what have I to do ? I am not a man for such business. Where shall I begin ? Where can I find men willing to put themselves to such risk for me ?”

The Count thought a while, for the honest young man, without help, would have remained half way ; and besides, an idea had come into his head which before he had not thought of ; he then hastened to add :

“ What are friends good for in this world ? In this affair I can assist you somewhat, if my sight does not deceive me ;” so speaking he approached the door of the hall, and opening it, called :

“ Olimpio !”

The peasant, like a hound that raises its head at the call of his master, started to his feet, answering with insolent familiarity :

“ Ah, your Excellency has noticed at last that I am still in the world ;” and grumblingly added in a lower tone, “ he wishes to send some one to heaven without a doubt.”



"Come here."

Olimpio went. When he entered the room with that humiliation, which even the most impudent plebeians feel at the sight of lordly halls and furniture, he removed his hat, and there fell upon his shoulders a mass of black hair, which, mingling with his beard, gave him the appearance of a river god crowned with reeds, as sculptors are wont to design them. A face hard as if cut from solid stone ; bloodshot eyes hidden under shaggy eyebrows, more like to wolves' in their den ; a voice deep and harsh.

"We are still alive, eh ?" the Count asked him, smiling.

"Eh ! certainly so, by a miracle of St. Nicholas. After the last murder which I committed for your Excellency"—

"What are you talking about, Olimpio ? What murder are you dreaming of ?"

"I dream, why ? On your account, order, and commission ;" and striking, with his large hand, the desk, added, "here you counted out to me the three hundred golden ducats, which was not too much ; but so it was ; I was contented with it, and there is no use of talking more about it. If I took little, the worse for me. Here"—

And as the Count, with his hands and eyes, warned him to stop from saying any more of this affair, he continued undisturbed.

"Oh ! then it is another thing ; you should have advised me in time ; I thought we were all friends. I beg your pardon. To return to our subject. The police were round me tighter than my belt ; the rope has grazed my neck oftener than the glass has wet my lips ; every tree seems to my eyes a gibbet. Now, in this dress I can hardly recognize myself ; and therefore I have dared to return, because, you know, idleness is the parent of all vices ; and I having nothing to do, am so reduced as to be obliged to work. If in the meanwhile some one of your

enemies has a throat more than you wish him to have, here we are at the orders of your Excellency ;” and with his right hand he made a horizontal sign to his neck.

“ You come like a medlar in October ; and I will try to find some little job for you to do, since there is no work of any importance on hand ; but I repeat it is a mere nothing—a slight touch of your trade—to keep you in practice.”

“ Let us hear, then ;” and the bandit, with the terrible familiarity that crime gives to accomplices, seated himself. He crossed his legs, leaned his left elbow upon the raised knee, rested his face upon the open hand, and with his eyes closed, his under lip projecting, looked the attitude of profound meditation.

“ This young cavalier, who is the most illustrious Lord Duke of Altemps,” the Count began to say.

“ Ah, ah !” and without unclosing his eyes, the bandit made a slight sign with his head.

“ Is desperately in love with a certain girl ”——

“ Of your class or ours ?”

“ How do I know ? A chambermaid.”

“ Neither of yours nor ours,” observed Olimpio, shrugging his shoulders in contempt.

“ Being sought in love, she has got a notion of standing upon her dignity. The Falconieris, who, if they had a patrimony equal to their pride, would ruin us, protect her. She lives in their house, and this makes her more haughty ; very likely, too, there is some prelate in the affair, which I have neither desire nor time to ascertain ; however it may be, this is an impediment for the Lord Duke ”——

“ Who calls me ?” asked the Duke, suddenly starting.

“ Poor youth, see how his passion bewilders him ! I wager you have not heard a word of what I and Olimpio have been talking about.”

The Duke looked down and blushed.

"In conclusion, Olimpio, it is necessary that you steal her away by force, and carry her where you shall be ordered."

"Is that all, your Excellency?"

"That is all for the present. You will try to enter the palace ; if not able, force a door or a grate on the ground floor ; if this does not succeed, try a rope ladder"—

"Poh ! that is enough. I know these things very well myself, with some additions which you don't know. Let me see—one—two—three—I want four companions."

"Those you will find yourself."

"Pistols and horses must be provided. How much do you intend to expend on this enterprise?"

"Well, will not five hundred ducats do?"

"No, sir ; they are not enough. After giving a share to my companions, taking away the expense for horses and weapons, there will be nothing left for me."

"Come, we shall not quarrel about that. Say eight hundred ducats, besides the protection and favor which you may hope from me."

"Poh, poh ! I shall have to order a cart to carry them home ! The feast ended, the flowers are taken away. Sir Count, let us end this nonsense ; when I come back to you, like a cricket, then you may feed me on dew. Where am I to carry the girl?"

"To the palace of the Duke, or to some one of his numerous country seats, or wherever he indicates."

"A mistake, your Excellency ; if the police get an inkling of the affair, the first places they will visit will be the residences of my Lord Duke. You must then hire or borrow from some person secretly a *villa* far from the city ; and it would be better to *hire* it by means of some person unconnected with your home."

The Count looked in the face of Olimpio, and smiled in a

strange manner, as a mockery for not having been understood ; then seated himself at his desk and began to write. The ruffian asked some short and rough questions of the young Duke, who answered him in a careless manner ; he felt like a leaf blown about by the wind ; he had fallen into the power of that kind of fascination which some snakes use towards animals ; he wished to protest, he tried to fly, but could not. When the charm seemed ready to break, there would appear to his mind the image of the loved girl, who with equal love would throw her arms around his neck. Then a burning fire would course through his veins ; the arteries seemed ready to burst, and if the deed were to be committed then, it would not have seemed to him premature. Youth, desire, and hope form a chain, within which an honest and passionate soul often debates, but seldom breaks ; if excitement is then added, no human power can resist it. The evil genius had conquered, and the good was flying away covering his face with its wings. The Count, although busy with his writing, still felt the victory of vice over the virtue of an ingenuous youth ; suddenly stopping, he asked carelessly :

“ When is the undertaking to be ? ”

“ According to my calculations, it can't be ready until to-morrow night : ” replied Olimpio.

“ To-morrow night, eh ? But do you not know that the hour-glass with which passion measures the time of expectation, is a torch which throws its burning sparks upon the heart of a poor lover ? You are getting old Olimpio, and are not as you used to be. Once one could stamp upon your face, *cito ac fidelis*, which motto belongs to the decision of the sacred Roman Tribunal, and which motto, however, does not prevent litigation lasting as long as the siege of Troy, and to be treacherous enough to shame Sinon. After a trot we must be contented with a pace ; to-morrow, then. A little after, bending his face towards the Duke, he asked : “ Although by nature I revolt from any kind of in-

discreet curiosity, still I cannot resist the desire of knowing the name of your innamorata. Would you be kind enough to inform me, Duke ?”

“ Lucrezia.”

“ Oh, Lucrezia ! It seems fated, that these Lucrezias should always turn our Roman brains. This time, however, she will not cause the expulsion of the king of Rome : we have Popes now, who have a better foothold, may God preserve them, and possess different virtues than those of Tarquin ; and Roderigo Lenzuoli is enough for them. Italy can do rather better without the sun than the Pope ; without their blessings, *urbi et orbi*, grain could not grow ;” and returning to his writing, murmured, as in excess of merriment, “ Lucrezia :

Crezia, Creziuccia, Crezina,  
Ardo per voi sera e mattina.”

Having then finished his writing he arose, saying :

“ Olimpio, I believe you have to say your rosary, so you may go now. Be careful that no one sees you going out of my house ; for, although you may be sweeter than bread, and as honest as a coat of mail, you can well understand that one may have better friendships than yours. Marzio ;” and Marzio came in.

“ Marzio, accompany this evangelist by the back stairway to the door of the garden that opens on the lane. Good-bye ; remember me in your prayers.”

“ How are you, my good fellow ?” asked Olimpio, slapping the shoulder of Marzio, as he was descending the stairs.

“ As it pleases God,” replied Marzio, a little harshly.

“ Hallo ! you don’t recollect me, Marzio ?” said the other.

“ I, no.”



"Look at me better, and then you will see that what I think you think."

"And what do you think?"

"I think that we should be a magnificent pair of ear-rings to hang from Dame Gibbet."

"Is that you, Olimpio?"

"The spirit of the gibbet acts like vinegar upon the nose, it clears the intellect and recalls the memory."

"Count," the young Duke began to say hesitatingly; "I fear I show myself ungrateful to your counsel and aid—but still I feel I cannot thank you—God—(but I do wrong in invoking his holy name in this wicked affair, it were better if he knew nothing about it.) May fortune grant that this does not end in evil."

"And fortune is on your side; since, being a woman, she loves the young and bold. If Cæsar had not passed the Rubicon, would he have become Dictator of Rome?"

"True, but the Ides of March would not have seen him slain at the foot of Pompey's statue."

"Every man carries from his birth his star's ascendant. Forward, then. You cannot fail, for a crowd of Italian, Greek, and Latin authors support you. And why do you fear to trust to Fortune? She rules the world. Look at Sulla, he more than any one knew how to settle differences with the axe, and he dedicated to her the beautiful temple of Præneste."

In this manner comforting him, he dismissed the ill-starred youth, who when he went out walked by fits and starts; the words of the Count had greatly disturbed him, as also the affair to which he had lent himself. He felt the evil, he feared the worst; but having been urged so far into crime, knew not how to retreat. Passion, the boa constrictor of the soul, bound him

more and more tightly, and stifled within him the last breath of virtue.

The Count, as soon as the Duke had left him, took up the paper upon which he had been writing, and read, stopping occasionally to laugh heartily :

“ ‘ MOST REVEREND AND ILLUSTRIOUS MONSIGNORE :—

“ ‘ The greatest iniquity that has ever stained this most august and happy seat of true religion is about to happen. The Duke Serafino D’Altemps, to give a sway to some of his passionate desires, conspires to-morrow night to abduct with an armed force an honest girl named Lucrezia, from the palace of Falconieri, a servant in the house of the above mentioned family. The Duke is accompanied by three or four of the most desperate banditti, commanded by the famous Olimpio, sought for two years by justice for robberies and assassinations, with the offer of a reward of three hundred golden ducats. Be on your guard, for they are people used to all sorts of daring attempts, and danger only augments their boldness. A lover of good governments, and zealous of order and the exaltation of the Holy Mother Church warns you of this.

“ ‘ ROME, AUG. 6th, 1598.’ ”

“ All right : the handwriting can never be known for mine ; this note in one hour will be in the pious hands of Monsignore Taverna.” He folded it, he sealed it, making a cross over it, and directed it to Monsignore Taverna, Governor of Rome.

“ Honor to whom honor is due : he is a duke and must be treated as one. Of that pearl of a Prince, we will think by and by. And so we get rid of Olimpio, if he does not manage to escape this time. The net is set according to the rules of art : but

‘ Rade volte addivien, che alle alte imprese  
Fortuna ingiuriosa non contrasti.’ ”



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TEMPTATION.

O male, o persuasore  
Orribile di mall,  
Bisogno. . . . .

PARINI, *Il Bisogno.*

THE young couple entered. The man kissed reverently the Count's hand—the woman would have done the same, but the child which she held to her bosom prevented her by crying loudly. Was it a chance or a presentiment? Man knows not the hidden secrets of nature. The Count gazed steadily at the woman, and seeing she was wonderfully beautiful, his eyes dilated while they sparkled like the lightning.

“Who are you good people, and what can I do for you?”

“Your Excellency,” said the young man, “do you not recognize me? I am the son of that poor carpenter—do you not remember?—who was ruined nearly four years ago, and had it not been for your charity, would have thrown himself into the Tiber.”

“Ah! now I remember. You have grown to be a man, my boy; and how is the good old man, your father?”

“The Lord has called him to himself. Believe me, your Excellency, his last sigh was for God, his last but one for your family and yourself. He was never weary of calling down blessings upon you, and wishing you from heaven all the prosperity which man can desire.”

"May God keep him in his holy peace. Are these your wife and child?"

"Yes, your Excellency. As soon as my wife recovered, I thought it my duty to bring her to do reverence to you, and to offer thanks with all our hearts, for to you, after God, we owe all our happiness."

"Are you happy?"

"Very happy, your Excellency, except the memory of my lost father sometimes comes to disturb me; but his years were many, and he died like a child going to sleep. He had no sins upon his soul; and I was a witness how quietly he passed the last night. Poor father!" and so saying he wiped away his tears.

"And you, good woman, are you happy?"

"Yes, sir, by the grace of the Blessed Virgin, more than thought can imagine, or words express. Michele loves me, and I love him, and we both love very much this beautiful angel of ours. Michele earns enough for our support, and a little more. So your Excellency sees it would be complaining of God's providence not to be satisfied." And the woman in saying this looked almost divine.

"You are then happy?" the Count asked, for the third time, with a deep voice.

"Through your goodness we can say so, your Excellency. When I first entered Michele's house I learned to venerate your name. The first word I shall teach this child, will be to bless the name of the charitable lord Francesco Cenci."

"You fill my heart with joy," the Count said, concealing the rage which choked him; and, to better dissemble, he kissed and patted the little child. "Good people! worthy souls! Still the little good I did you does not deserve so many thanks; besides, it belongs to us favored with large wealth to help Christ's poor. Of what use is money, if not to repair some misfortune?"

Can it be better spent ? Do we not surely invest it in heaven, where it will be repaid to us a hundredfold ? I ought then to thank you, my beloved, for having given me an opportunity for doing good." He then, taking a purse from the drawer in his desk, drew out a handful of gold, and offered it to the woman, who blushing tried to refuse it ; but the Count pressing it upon her, said :

"Take it, my daughter, take it. You should have told me before of the birth of this child, I should have wished to have been godfather. But take this, and buy him something handsome, for although very beautiful, still, as the poet says,

‘A beautiful robe enhances beauty.’

I would that people in seeing him should exclaim : she is fortunate who has so fine a child, and your mother's heart will exult."

The young mother at first smiled, then, being moved by these gentle words that touched her heart, she wept ; not, however, ceasing to smile, as when in spring the rain falls while the sun shines, and the falling drops cause that wonderful bow, which we call a witness of the alliance of peace between God and man, and would that it were so !

"Continue to love each other," continued the Count, with the solemn voice of a father ; "and may jealousy never disturb the serenity of your days, nor may you ever love the house of another better than your own—live peacefully and in the holy fear of God. Sometime, in your prayers remember me, a poor old man, for I am not—oh, believe me, I am not as I may seem to you, happy (and the Count from being pale, as he usually was, became livid) ; and if in any need you should come to me, you will surely find me a father."

The young people leaned forward as if to kiss his hand, but he would not consent to it, and with benign voice and gesture

dismissed them. In crossing the hall, they said to each other :

“ Oh, the pious lord ! The charitable gentleman ! ”

The valets hearing these words looked at each other, shrugging their shoulders, and the boldest among them murmured :

“ Has the devil made himself a Capuchin friar ? ”

“ Happy, happy ! ” burst forth Francesco Cenci, giving free vent to his suppressed anger, “ and they come to tell it to my face ! They did this to torment me with the sight of their happiness ! This is the greatest insult I have endured for a long time ! Marzio ! run quickly and rejoin Olimpio—bring him back—haste, I say. If you return with him before twelve, I will give you ten ducats. I’ll see if any man without shedding tears of blood shall dare to declare in the face of Francesco Cenci that he is happy ! ”

At this moment, and certainly it was unfortunate for him, the worthy priest entered softly. *Omnes sitientes venite ad aquas*, he joyfully thought to himself, and he held together the folds of his torn robe ; but the deep growling of Nero started him from his joy. The priest (forgetful though he was of even the most grievous offences) remembered that of his enemy, the dog, and he appeared like Lot’s wife, when she turned to look back on burning Sodom.

“ Silence, Nero ! Reverend sir, approach without fear.”

The priest, regaining courage, moved a few steps sideways, like a crab ; and being requested to seat himself, sat upon the extreme corner of the chair, shrunken like an owl on the corner of the roof.

“ Speak, sir, I am at your pleasure.”

“ I am not at all at mine,” thought the priest, but did not say it ; instead, he spoke :

“ The fame ”——

Nero, hearing the priest’s voice, began to growl again, and

the priest started, frightened ; the dog being again quieted, the priest attempted to speak, always watching with a side look the brute, and cursing him within himself.

“ The fame of your magnanimous deeds, which resound throughout the world ”——

“ And through Rome ?”

“ That is understood, of course, my dear sir, since Rome is part of the world.”

“ And for that reason I said so.”

“ And compares you to Cæsar ”——

“ Which of the two, reverend sir, Julius or Octavius ?”

“ Rumor does not signify exactly which one, but I mean the one who made so many presents to the Romans, both during his life and after he was dead.”

“ And do you know why he could give so much ?”

“ Eh ! I suppose because he had plenty.”

“ Of course he had plenty of money, since he robbed the whole world ; and his debt has fallen upon us, his descendants, and we must pay it with large interest. I tell you ” ——

“ What ! does it belong to you to pay the debts of Julius Cæsar ?”

“ And you have come here to compare me, to my face, to this illustrious robber of provinces and kingdoms ?”

The unfortunate priest cursed the hour that had put the idea into his head of repeating a speech composed a long time before for the occasion ; it would have been better for him, if he had spoken in his usual manner. “ Ah !” he thought, “ if things could be done twice !” Then, mortified, he murmured :

“ Pardon me, sir—I did not intend—I thought to imitate the speech of my Lord Giovanni della Casa to Charles the Fifth—that ” ——

“ Listen to me,” said Cenci, leaving at once his mocking tone, and assuming a severe expression ; “ I am old, and you are

more so than I ; hence, neither of us have any time to spare ; speak distinctly and quickly. All long things tire me—even Eternity.”

The priest caught thus unaware, knew not where to begin ; the sudden change from sweet to sour had astonished him ; besides, the last sentence of the Count sounded badly, and like a heretic. At last, like a man from whom a sudden gust of wind has blown all his papers off his desk, he said :

“ Your Excellency—you see in me a priest—and what is more, a country curate—my church resembles exactly a sieve. The rain pours from the roof and mixes with the wine in the cups. My parsonage is like a baked pomegranate—often when it rains I am obliged to lie in bed with an open umbrella ; and that is not enough. Can you imagine with what I am obliged to wipe my face ? Can you guess ?”

“ Certainly not.”

“ With Rodomonte.”

“ And what is Rodomonte ?”

“ The cat of my parsonage ; and he, at least, gets something to eat on the roof ; but for Marco and I, who cannot procure food on the roofs, we are often obliged to go without dinner and supper, and I sigh and Marco brays. I have only one robe—or rather—as Chremes says in the *Heautontimoroumenos*, ignorant if his son were living—I cannot say if I have or not ; it is certainly so shiny that I can see myself in it ; and, at least with a little mending, it might have lasted me until December—and now, see how your Excellency’s dog has ruined it !” And in showing the rent, his voice seemed the intonation of *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*.

“ Have you not taken a vow of poverty ? Why do you complain of a state which so nearly reaches perfection ? This perfection does not please you then ? You would prefer rather to be imperfect, with some thousand ducats income, than per-



fect, and more than perfect, with poverty? Complain to the author of this grammar, which you priests do not seem to understand. Jesus Christ has preached to you that your goods were not of this earth; look at heaven, and select there your field; there is no space wanting, thank God. But you shut your eyes, and say in your hearts, 'the doubloon is the Father, the half-doubloon the Son, the third the Holy Ghost;' and, finally, believe one is derived from the other.

'Godete, Preti, poichè il vostro Cristo  
Dal Turchi e dal concilli vi difende.'

Shame, reverend sir, shame upon this continual thought of worldly things! When the Church used chalices of wood, the priests were of gold! It is St. Clement of Alexandria who said it. Now that the Church has golden chalices, the priests are of wood. And do you know, reverend sir, of what kind of wood? Of that wood which the holy Gospel declares should be cut down and thrown into the fire, because unfruitful."

The poor curate bore this shower of reproaches as veteran soldiers the discharge of their enemies' balls, then exclaimed, with a sigh:

"Ah! St. Clement of Alexandria was a very learned saint; but I don't believe he was obliged to lie in bed with his umbrella open when it rained."

"It may be so. Are you in want of the necessaries of life? Then have recourse to the rich prelates. Have not they, perhaps, had too much? But what do you want of us—the last drops of blood? Go; knock at the palaces of Bishops; at the doors of Abbots. Knock, I say, and it will be opened to you; ask and it will be given; *pulsate, et aperietur vobis* has been said by Him who never fails."

"But—it seems these dignitaries are generally busy out of doors; for I have tried to knock at their doors, but seeing I

might break my knuckles before any one of them would open to me, I gave up the idea."

"You minor clergy are really a flock ; so the fat prelates generally call you ; and they behave like true shepherds to you. In short, every one can see that they use towards you all the shepherd's duties. Is there any one of them which they do not fulfill ? Do they not milk you ? Don't they shear you ? Don't they skin, roast, and eat you ? Now, then, be bold, and rebel against this wicked hierarchy ; publish to the world in what way upon one single person are heaped benefices, prebends, and abbey, either by simony, fraud, or some more vile action ; which, on the one side, make lazy, proud, vicious, and rascally priests ; and on the other, poor, vile, despised, and roguish ones ; show that the Councils have not reformed anything ; proclaim how this wicked college of hypocritical pharisees attends to nothing but how to make bread with the devil's flour. Oblige epicures to share their table with you, which they so like to spread to excess, and through the ignorance and folly of others will still be furnished to excess."

The curate, astonished at such a whirlwind of heresies, looked around with fear, and then observed in a low tone :

"For the love of God, your Excellency, be kind enough to remember that here in Rome there is something—that is—a certain holy office of Inquisition, and the Castle St. Angelo."

"You are afraid ? Very well, if you have learned to tremble, you should have also learned how to suffer. The lamb licks the hand that is about to kill him. A sublime example of perfect obedience, and deservedly praised. But why did you desert the banner of Nature ? Why did you throw aside your ancestral spade to rule over men ? When you priests leave the country, the vines cry after you, and the soil groans for you. Return, fugitive servants, to your ploughs and farms. The earth surpasses in love even the most affectionate of mothers ; she feeds,



clothes, and buries you, what more do you want, indiscreet men? Do you complain that Nature has disinherited you? It is false! Has the earth ever failed you? Where are buried the thousand generations that preceded you? In the earth. Has not mother Nature destined for each one of you three cubic feet of earth, and to some even more? Does not this remark please you? The breviary weighs less than the hoe. You wish to enjoy here the heaven you promise to others above. Lazy men, you wish to eat the honey gathered by the bees without working? But the bees use their stings to get rid of robbers; men do not know how to use their wisdom to be rid of you. Tell me, reverend sir, do you not think the sting of the bees deserves more credit than human reason? Then, live as you can, die as you please, but go away from me. You shall not get one ducat from me. Enough has been given you whereby to live. I have no money to aid your luxuries. I cannot pay the expenses of your vices, and you have more of them than Jacob's sons, although one vice costs more than three sons.

‘Credete voi però, Sardanapali,  
Potervi fare or femine, or mariti,  
E la chiesa or spelonca ed or taverna;  
E far tanti altri, ch'io non vo' dir, mali,  
E saziar tanti e sì strani appetiti,  
E non far ira alla bontà superna?’”

The poor priest stood like one who, far from any shelter, is surprised by a pouring rain in an open country, and bends his body ready to receive as much water as God is willing to send. But struck by the abomination of the last reproof, raised his eyes to heaven, and said :

“Your Excellency, as to Verdiana, the servant woman I have at home, I swear by Him who desires no man to swear, she is so old that she might have helped to bring the stones with which the Coliseum was built. But can you think, sir, that a

man of my age and character would give a thought to such dishonest deeds?"

"Why not? Old bones, like dry wood, blaze the soonest,

—————e, sarei, preso ed arso  
Tanto più, quanto son men verde legno,

Petrarch said; and in love affairs the canonical Petrarch was well versed, and more viciously too than the old sinner would make us believe, since he is of your profession."

The old priest raising his hands and face, exclaimed:

"Lord Jesus! what am I obliged to hear!"

Count Cenci suddenly made a horizontal line with his finger upon his forehead, as if he wished to change the tone of the conversation, and with milder voice continued:

"Oh, I did not apply this to you, my poor priest, who seem so reduced by want as to resemble St. Basil. If I ever design to speak about my own affairs to any one, be assured I would confess to no one but you. But a truce to words, my dear curate. How much is needed to restore the church and parsonage, buy a new robe to repair Nero's mischief, and half a dozen napkins, to let the fur of Rodomonte rest?"

"I will tell you, Verdiana and I have made the calculation a thousand times; she upon a corner of the almanac, and I upon the margin of my breviary, and we never could agree; for she always makes it more and I less, but two hundred ducats might possibly do, I should think."

"Two hundred ducats! Mercy, do you suppose they are plenty as prunes?"

"With less, I do not see how it can be done," said the priest, crossing his hands over his breast; "and mark, your Excellency, to that I should have to add about forty ducats of my own that I keep in the desk at the head of my bed, and which cost me some forty thousand fasts not ordered by the Church."

"Listen to me, Rev. Father ; I am not rich enough to presume to restore God's house. He is the master of good and bad weather ; and if he is willing to have rain come into his house, it is certain he likes rain water. I will give you a hundred ducats, but on one condition."

"What is it, your Excellency ?"

"That you will use them, together with your forty, in restoring the parsonage, getting the necessary furniture, the napkins, and a robe for yourself, and a dress also for Verdiana."

"Oh no, never, your Excellency, never ; I should like to repair the parsonage, to procure the furniture, and a dress for Verdiana, more than to replace my robe, but the Lord's things must be attended to before any private comfort. Verdiana and I agree upon this point, and we would never appropriate a penny to ourselves, if we could not first provide for the house of the Lord."

"What blasphemy are you uttering about God's house ? Has he, like us, need of a house to shelter him from the rains or the dews of night ? The universe is the house of God ; the stars, the sun and moon, and every earthly thing that lives, vegetates, or grows here below. God is all. He penetrates all, his divinity emanates from everything. God is to be worshipped in the magnificence of nature, in the works of intellect, and in the innocence and sensibility of man."

"Count," replied the curate, placing his hand over his heart with dignified simplicity, "I am a man, poor in intellect ; I believe what my fathers believed, and seek no more. I know, too, that the human mind often boldly rushes on, till it reaches a certain point, and can go no farther, and then between the doubts that torment a man, and the faith that consoles him, the wisest course, it appears to me, would be to hold firmly to the faith."

These sincere words fiercely stung Count Cenci, who, endea-

voring to conceal the wound under a multiplicity of wicked words, hastened to answer :

“ You, of course, according to the fashion of sophists, run away from the subject. I did not dispute your belief, but the manner of believing. How can you think God dislikes rain water in your church, for, if he did not, being the controller of it, he need not send it ? He created water and fire also : when he is wet, if he wishes to be dry, he has only to take one of the infinite number of suns in heaven, and put it in his fireplace. Can he fear water, who can walk upon it as on a paved street ? He that can open and shut the floodgates of heaven, as I do this box. Come, come, my dear curate, at least you can confess this, that He cares little about stormy or pleasant weather. Look here ; these are ducats, and new ones ” (and taking a handful of ducats, he showed them to the priest), “ these shall be yours on condition you will spend them for yourself and Verdiana. God is rich enough to pay his own expenses.” And so saying, he thrust his tempting face forward, as the devil did to St. Antonio. The priest coveted the money with his eyes, and the cupidity of poverty was expressed in every fibre of his body. A terrible struggle was going on in his poor soul. The Count, seeing the poor priest waver, quickly said :

“ And this last reason must convince you, that if you do not accept my condition, I shall put the money back in my drawer.”

“ Your Excellency ! ”——

“ But come ; let us put aside the reasons which I have expressed to you ; they do not please you, and I will insist no longer. Is it not true, however, that you must provide for two things : the church and the parsonage ? You must confess, then, that if the church is holy, the parsonage is also a religious place. Now, tell me, do you not commit a gross error by beginning at the former instead of the latter ? You will, at least, have done so much in the fulfillment of your duty. Do not be obstinate :

remember that there are men so just that they perish on account of their justice, and this King Solomon said."

"Your Excellency—certainly—in such a light—it seems to me—and yet"—

"Come, come, then ; accept, and promise to use it entirely for yourself. Think, if you please, of another reason ; as God is, you and I believe, eternal, He cannot complain of waiting four or six years, and I might say even centuries. If you were different from what you are, I would say, let us do as He does, who never thinks of us. Now, will you take them, or not ?"

"Ah, sir ! the temptation is great, but I fear to commit a very great sin."

"Will you take them, or not ?"

"Let me reflect. It is no small matter to overcome scruples for sinning, to a curate who has the charge of souls."

"Well, well ; put it all to the debt of my soul ; for I have a long account with Heaven."

"Ah ! I will take them."

The accusing angel bore this sin to the Court of Heaven, and registered it upon the record-book of human sins ; but the angel of Mercy let fall no tear over it to blot it out forever, as upon the pious oath of Uncle Toby.

"Here is the money ; now promise."

"I do promise."

"Now be careful not to fail. I will send, or I will come myself to see if you have kept that promise : if I find otherwise, woe to you. My name is Francesco Cenci, and that is enough."

The curate, both happy and sad, pocketed the money, and returning humble thanks, with a number of bows, brought to a conclusion his ill-omened visit.

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Marzio returned in company with Olimpio, and receiving



the promised reward, retired by the Count's order to the ante-room.

"Is there anything new, your Excellency?"

"There are a hundred and forty ducats more to put under your belt."

"Do you wish me to die of indigestion?"

"I thought a little while ago that you went off not well satisfied, and I have recalled you so as to give you some addition to good payment."

"This is really a deluge of affection to me!"

"A bad cavalier is he who takes no care of his horse; and there is no favor which I would not be ready and willing to do you, to remove from your heart the little aversion which you may have conceived for me."

"Aversion, I? How can you think so, Lord Count. I have always liked you more than bread."

"Which one bites and swallows, eh? Come here, you funny fellow, for it is only a joke that I am now going to propose to you. The ducats I spoke of are already yours."

"Where are they?"

"Nothing is wanted, but that you go and take them. Don't make wry faces. Did you see that crow of a priest? well, I have given them to him for your sake. Now, you must know that this fellow is the curate of St. Sabina, a small church, far from any habitation. In his house he keeps an old woman, a cat, and as I understand him, a donkey: an easy affair, and to be accomplished to-night. You will find the money within the kneeling desk, on one side of the priest's bed."

"Why did you give them to him, if you intended to take them away so soon again from the poor devil?"

"When I attempted to teach you the way to enter the Falconieri palace, you said it was not becoming for me to enter into such affairs: do you remember? Use towards me, then

the same discretion that you wished me to have towards you."

"You are right; I shall not say another word. Do you wish anything more, Sir Count?"

"Ah, yes, another little service. Do you know the carpenter who lives near Ripetta; the one who rebuilt his house with my money?"

"The young man who was waiting in the hall a little while ago? Certainly, I know him, and where he lives; for when you gave the money to rebuild his house, I went to see it, to try and solve the riddle of your benevolence."

"What! am not I in the habit of doing good, then? and even now, am I not benefiting you? Do not add ingratitude to your other sins; for that is the one least liked by the guardian angel—to-morrow night."

"I cannot serve you; I am engaged with the Lord Duke; don't you remember?"

"I will excuse you to him."

"Excuse me; for the honor of the profession, I cannot fail."

"I will try to have him excuse you with his own mouth."

"Oh, very well, then."

"To-morrow night you will enter by some means the carpenter's shop; take his tools, and the wood you will find there, and make a pile of them; place underneath some bituminous matter (which I will prepare for you, and you may come to-morrow after the *Ave Maria*, by the back entrance, for it); light it, and then go away, after first bolting the door of the shop. You will receive for this pious work one hundred ducats. Serve me faithfully, for in a short time I will make you rich. And where, indeed, can I better employ my money than with you?—and you agree with me. Go now by the garden gate, and mind that no one sees you either in going or returning."

Olimpio obeyed.



Francesco Cenci being at last alone, rubbed his hands with deep satisfaction, and with half uttered voice, murmured :

“ This morning is Easter for me. This is what I really call living ! A parricide plotted, an abduction contrived, a robbery and a fire prepared—the traitors afterwards betrayed ; and in addition, I have made a holy man fall. While I live in this world the devil may go and rusticate in a villa. I am the opposite of Titus. He mourned if he passed a day without doing good, I am in a fever if I do not commit a score of crimes. Titus ! An impostor of humanity, a jesuit of paganism ! Judea shall speak for me, and the fire extinguished by a torrent of human blood ; and the multitude of those crucified, for whom the ground failed to plant crosses, and crosses for bodies ; the eleven thousand who died in prison by starvation, and the thousands thrown to the wild beasts for having courageously defended their country. Go, go, unfeeling nature, who knew neither how to love or hate ! you with weeping let a million and a half of men be killed ; and also wept when the beautiful Berenice was torn from your side. Domitian, your brother, was made of different metal—an iron heart—a head of bronze—august image of a king. Thunderbolts cannot destroy such demigods ; when it touches, it only consecrates them. The apostate calls you an emperor like a wild beast ; you a wild beast, who went to Persia to perish, when you could have spent a blessed life in Rome or Byzantium ? Of what good is a life if after death it does not make posterity tremble at our names, and fear to see us at any moment rise from our tombs ? Every one has heard of the deluge. Belief in God is founded on fear, and hence, he had victims of blood. Tyrants have called themselves images of the God of Moses, who blows with his own mouth into the fire of hell, hence they were feared, and had also their victims of blood and always will have. If the Pope had remained merely a minister of the Lamb of God, by this time they would have roasted him. The

paternal heart of His Holiness burns with envy because the piazza of the Vatican is surpassed in beauty by that of Valladolid. Good and evil grasp with their hands the hair of humanity ; but the good dresses the hair, the evil tears it out. I worship force. Everything is false but force ; it heats the iron, brands generations on their cheeks, and thus scourging, disperses them through the world.

Tremate, maledite, e obbedite.  
Così quaggiù si vive,  
E la porta del ciel si trova aperta !

If I had been in the battle which the rebellious Angels fought against God—God—God ! This word comes continually back to me like a tiresome gnat, vainly driven off. Who hath ever seen this being ? who spoken to him ? More than fifty years have now passed since I first offended him with all kind of outrages, and his curse fattens my fields. Why did he create me thus ? He used his scissors upon the whole piece, and could have cut me out in his own fashion. And if he did not create me, why should he, Creator, suffer in peace others to rob him and spoil his trade ? *Anima mala* ; are our souls then wicked ? Be it so ; I certainly have no reasonable foundation for disputing it ; but was it not in his power to make me good or bad ? *Pœnituit* ! Truly ! Then if he repented, it is a sign he had made a mistake ; and if he mistook, why should we bear the penalty of his error ? Where is, then, his omniscience ? where is his omnipotence ? where is his infinite love ? What should we think of a woman who struck her son for being born a hunchback ? And if he erred as this book of the world openly shows on every page, and he is as truly good as those who know him would have us believe, could he not destroy man and nature entirely, and begin again ? Better to do so than lose himself in that labyrinth of redemption, which, after all, has not redeemed any-

thing. It was smoke ; it has left the world as it found it—and if men went to perdition by gradual steps before, now they run to it. Hell ! Let it be so ; I will go there for the very reason that the sentence will be given by Him, who is judge and party, and what is more without appeal. All wicked judges condemn without appeal. But God has made us, and not we ourselves. No matter ; if the soul dies with the body, it is well ; if it survives, with this even I am content, on condition that the faculty which I now possess of cursing *per omnia sæcula sæculorum, amen*, will not be taken from me."

## CHAPTER V.

### OF FRANCESCO CENCI AGAIN,

By thy cold breast, and serpent smile,  
By thy unfathomed gulfs of guile,  
By that most seeming virtuous eye—  
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy,  
By the perfection of thine art,  
Which passed for human thine own heart,  
By thy delight in other's pain,  
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,  
I call upon thee ! and compel  
Thyself to be thy proper hell !     BRON.

I HAVE not said enough of Francesco Cenci. So strange, rich, and even monstrous does his mind appear from what I have already described, and from what I shall yet describe in the course of this history, that it is worth while to stop and think upon this man. I know not if it be so now, but once such an intoxication was diffused through the very air of Rome, that men seemed changed from the accustomed habits of human nature. Fate had ordained, that for a time every one should appear different from the accustomed manner of things, and rather immense than great. Who more valorous than Cæsar ? Who more virtuous than Cato ? Who more of a politician than Augustus, more of a dissimulator than Tiberius, more cruel than Nero, more stupid than Claudius ? And—but we will not enumerate too many names—who more magnanimous than the Antonines ? The women themselves reach the summit of lust and chastity, of perfidy

and truth. Lucretia, Cornelia, Portia, Arria, Epponina were born in the same city which produced Livia, Poppea, and Messalina. The buildings themselves instead of being conquered by, seem to conquer time. They stand ; and in spite of the injuries of ages, and the more hurtful injuries of man, they have not been destroyed. Through Europe, Asia, and Africa yet appear relics of this wonderful people, like the bones of a corpse of which the whole world is the sepulchre.

The Roman Eagle, wearing out her wings in the immense flight of conquest, scattered her feathers throughout the universe. Rome threw from the top of her capitol an iron net over the living ; later she tried to throw another of beliefs and fears, and conquer anew. The Popes, under the shadow of the Coliseum, were alone able to conceive the thought of making themselves kings of the soul. When they consented to be taken to Avignon, then they really became *servants of servants*. The Popedom in the slap on the face given to Boniface VIII. suffered an insult from which it is difficult ever to raise it ; still Jesus received it, and yet he lives and reigns ; but the process submitted to by Boniface, and which the coward Clement V. sustained through fear, was an incurable wound to the pontifical authority.

Warlike Rome rushes like a lion, and rends or forgives the fierce enemy. Priestly Rome follows, like a wild beast, the barbarian at a distance ; but on the day of battle seizes upon the plunder of war. Rome, with her helmet, sends forth proconsuls, who chain kings within a circle traced upon the ground ; mitred Rome sends friars with shaven heads and bare feet to throw themselves between the axe of the barbarian and the oppressed nations. And why were these friars sent ? Perhaps to reclaim under the mantle of Christ the fallen ones, or rather to agree about their share of plunder and flesh before the axe should fall ! Let history say. Rome falls either like a fighting gladiator, or

like a trampled reptile ; in both cases she manifests mightily the spirit of life ; since, as far as human intellect is able to foresee, she cannot be extinguished, but only transformed. The gladiator falls drenching the ground with his blood, rises and fights again, and lies down only when the last drops ooze from his wound, slowly, heavily, and rarely like the first drops of a shower. The snake cut in two continues to move the divided parts ; it is enough for him to live, when even his life could be shown in no other way than by the last convulsions of agony. The Roman torch, twice kindled by the hand of fate, sent, while the bituminous matter lasted, from time to time a flame able to reduce to ashes or illuminate a generation. Rome now fulfills her second destiny, not knowing how or not wishing to throw down the load which bent her to the ground, she is trembling at every step, and nodding to a fall. He who was once and always pretended to be a master, is now forced to stretch forth his hands and beg of his former servants.—Fear the enemy's gifts ! He prostrates himself, but smilingly, at the Priest's feet ; he venerates religious power, to weave a thread in order to join it to others of violent authority, to strengthen the chain of the world. Finding no right upon the earth, he tries through priests to derive one from heaven. Napoleon exalted the Pontificate that he might be anointed Emperor, and then threw it down ; a religious machine brought forth on a festival day, and then laid by or destroyed. When Napoleon forgot his real, his glorious origin—that of the people—he evoked the Popedom, as Saul evoked the spirit of Samuel, that he might feign a divine origin. Had it not been for the snows of the North, the keys of the Church might now be found in some Museum with other spoils taken in war. And thus it has always happened on the part of France ; sometimes she has presented herself as an ally, sometimes as a devoted daughter ; she has always lied. Her cry has been



like that of Diogenes exposed in the market-place to be sold as a slave : “ Who wishes to buy a master ? ”

But this cannot, neither will it last. All things have their death. Doubt has gnawed the root of the tree, and it has produced a fruit of hatred ; people have eaten of it, and been satiated : we shall see whether the vassals of Philip the Fair, educated in the school of Voltaire, will cause the old tree to bring forth fruits of life. Fatal error ! Cæsar who was killed unawares, and Diogenes to whom was granted his life with the bread of shame, did they not finally die an equal death ? Priestly Rome will die, but not the Church of Christ. As our Redeemer throwing off the covering of his sepulchre, appeared glorious with the rays of eternity, so the Church, throwing into the Tiber her worldly ornaments, which cause her to be taken for the woman of the Revelations, drunk with the blood of Saints, will place herself before the generations, directing them in the way to heaven. From the wonderful surging of barbarism, which followed the wreck of Roman civilization, there should not have floated two crowned heads, neither new torments nor new tormentors ; but instead, the cross of Christ, the common bond of brother nations, blessing all people who live in peace on the land of their fathers. If, however, the Father of the Faithful must be crowned, Christ had taught him of what his crown should be composed ; all the gems of the world are not worth a thorn of the crown of Christ.

These truths have been preached *ab antiquo* by Italian minds ; but although continually repeated, are not less dangerous to those who speak them, nor less hated by those who should listen to them, but do not.

Many of our great men, who professed such truths, rest now in the church of Santa Croce under splendid monuments ; if now living, they would be laboring in prison : where I am now, near



that same temple, hoping in my turn, if not fame, at least rest in my tomb.\*

Judges and priests affirm that these are grave errors ; and not only do they affirm it, but prove it with prison and exile : and if permitted even with burning alive. The admonition : " Love justice ye who administer justice on the earth," does not find an echo in their ears. Magnetic needles continually turning to the pole of tyranny and error, one day in their turn they will be judged. Blessed those whose measure will be found just on that day !

Francesco Cenci was a corrupt breath of ancient Roman genius ; a Latin spark escaped from an uncovered sepulchre, but still a Latin one : he had an indomitable nature, a satirical talent, an implacable soul, and a love of the great, monstrous, and grotesque. If he had lived in the time of Junius Brutus he would not only have condemned his children, but bringing violence against nature to its utmost, he would have decapitated them with his own hands. He was fond of science, which afterwards, like Solomon, he despised, calling it vanity and labor of spirit ; or he availed himself of it in the manner of the Sybarites, who used roses as an instrument of death. He had riches and lavished them without being able to destroy them. With an immense power of sense, of thought, and of action, he saw before him the two roads of good and evil. That of the good, narrow on account of the age : some domestic affection, the power to found churches and monasteries, to alleviate poverty by alms, which perpetuates it ; a quiet life, an obscure death ; a memory as lasting as the echo of the voices of the monks who sing the *miserere* through the naves of the parish church. Nor was the age in which he lived such as to extend the wonderful powers of his mind to greater objects : those were days of agony for Italian intellect ; our heaven bore the leaden cloak of Dante's hyp-

\* The author wrote this book in prison, being on trial for the part which he had taken in the late revolution of 1848-9.

ocrites, which allowed those who vegetated under it to go scarcely an inch in a hundred years. Notwithstanding he endeavored to do great things, men and worldly affairs bound him like the shirt of Agamemnon, so that shortly to do good wearied him, then seemed to him contemptible, and finally he hated it. He turned to do evil, and said like the devil—"Be thou my good!" The Titan's part pleased him, and it seemed a magnificent boldness to him to raise his rebellious head against heaven and challenge it. Every desire he turned to evil; as a means of rising to fame, he loved it with the delirium of drunkenness, and with the obstinacy of a calculator: to exceed iniquities then known he imagined the column of Hercules transported by him and new worlds discovered: he joined family ties for the pleasure of wickedly tearing them asunder: he nourished the dearest affections to crush them either under the blow of cruel mockery, or less painfully with a dagger: he did not believe in God, but he felt Him like a nail in the middle of his heart; and then he brutally blasphemed him, like the bear, who bites the lance which has hurt him, thinking to heal the wound: in short, a horrid mixture of an Ajax, a Nero, and a common bandit, Don Giovanni is a fragment of his character. He lived a torment to himself and others: he hated and was hated in return; he fed himself on evil, and evil killed him. He died as perhaps he would have chosen to die; since his wicked passions had gone so far to stifle all feelings of nature, that we may be permitted to suppose, that knowing himself now burdened with years, and his powers of injuring less strong, at least for a long time, his guilty soul exulted in the thought of the murder of his body, which would be able to send his whole family by a bloody path to their graves. I imagine to myself that I can see his wicked spirit blowing the fire which heated the instrument that lacerated the flesh of his son Giacomo; swinging the club that broke his temple; and gathering in his hands the blood dripping from the axe which cut

off the heads of his kindred, and bathing his bosom with it, as if it were refreshing dew. I firmly believe it would have been a meritorious work not only to have scattered his ashes to the four winds of heaven, but condemned his memory to everlasting oblivion, if the Divine Council had not placed innocence by the side of crime, virtue by the side of vice, grief by that of pleasure, light by that of darkness : and had not his cruelty served to show how beautiful an angel of love his daughter Beatrice was—the most simple, the most courageous, and the most unhappy of Italian girls.

Since justice urges me to penetrate into this ancient sepulchre, I will uncover it ; sure to find buried there a virgin as unspotted as the body of St. Cecilia, discovered in the Roman catacombs,\* clothed in a white dress, symbol of purity ; in an attitude of deep repose, with a red ribbon round her swan-like neck : this red tape is the trace of the axe which severed a divine head from a divine body !

\* The body of St. Cecilia decapitated, was found the very same year in which Beatrice Cenci was beheaded.

## CHAPTER VI.

### N E R O .

Fanciulla del dolore, o tu che sai  
Piacere anco sepolta, e ricoperta  
Dal silenzio di trecento anni, bella  
Sal tornare alla idea come nel giorno  
Che te lo Amor rapiva, o tu delizia  
Dei racconti di queste itale care  
Fanciulle, che spirar sai dalle stesse  
Dipinte tele, onde l'occhio fatato  
Dal tuo sguardo, in imago ancor ti cerca  
Rediviva per Roma, abbi il mio pianto.

ANFOREI BEATRICE CECIL.

BEATRICE was beautiful as the thought of God, when he was affectionately moved to create the mother of all living.

Love with his rosy hands delineated the soft curves of her delicate face, and pressing his finger on the chin to contemplate his lovely work, left there the dimple—true mark of love. Her mouth was like a flower freshly culled in Paradise, breathing a divine fragrance, and giving to her countenance an expression more than human ; as the ancients sung, a fragrance of ambrosia revealed to mortals the presence of a God. Her eyes often sought heaven, and fixed themselves there, as if with a desire either of looking upon her home, to which she was soon to return ; or, to discover there some mysterious signs revealed to her alone ; or, lastly, because the maternal spirit beckoned her to it. Certainly between the eyes of this illustrious girl and our hemisphere, when it shines serenely, there seemed to be, I might

say, almost a relationship, for both were of the deepest blue : both announced the glory of their Creator. When her eyes declined earthward, looking upon a person or any object, they would open so brilliantly and clearly, that her soul seemed to expand with them ; any one standing before her, if not most innocent of heart, would hastily carry his hand to his breast, doubting whether its covering of flesh would protect the bad thoughts there concealed ; others would weep with tenderness ; wherever she turned them, the air would become more pure, the heavens more joyous. If she went to nightly balls, the light of the candles, assisted by the brightness of her eyes, would be doubled ; harmonious sounds would breathe more melodiously, and pleasure would roll like waves into the hearts of the young. When she disappeared from the festival, ennui would diffuse an icy breath over the general happiness. Misfortune had certainly fanned her snow-white forehead with its wings ; but had not courage enough to leave there a disagreeable trace, and passed by. The prayers of mortals might have rested there, and thence ascended more purely to the throne of God. In the happy days, alas too rare ! of her life, she loved to unbind in youthful sport her mass of blond hair, and put it in the sunlight, as if she wished to establish a rivalry with its rays ; but the sun shed such a loving splendor upon them, that people trembled with reverence and pleasure to look at her, deeming her a saint descended from heaven, and surrounded by a radiated halo.

Oh, Beauty ! from my earliest years I have raised to you an altar in my soul, upon which I sacrifice my sweetest thoughts—thoughts that lift me above this mortal clay, and draw me nearer to the creator of all beauty ; neither have I words, nor do I believe any human tongue possesses them, capable of describing you worthily ; if I could by pressing this paper to my heart, impress upon it its pulsations, I might then reveal to people ideas never heard before ; this was never granted me, nor to any

other, and hence my images are revealed incomplete, vague, and confused ; and therefore if the fancy of whoever reads cannot supply the defect, I despair of being understood. Oh ! with how many chains the human soul is bound on this earth ! Beauty and Love, you were by the side of God in the day of creation. He made you His first ministers on the face of the earth. Ugliness and Hatred came afterwards, sparks which burst with the first thunderbolt which God hurled against man, when he condemned him to affliction and death. The worship of Beauty and Love brings again our disinherited race to his divine origin.

Beatrice was seated upon a *parterre* of the Cenci palace, which overlooked the garden ; she held in her lap a child who, from his eyes, hair, and general aspect seemed to be her brother ; she lovingly smoothed his hair, and kissed him from time to time on the forehead. The boy rested his head on his sister's bosom, and fixed his motionless eyes upon her, but without speculation, like a person absorbed in the thought of something beyond this world. Sickness had withered the flower of his youth ; his skin was light, and of so clear and pallid a white, that the rays of the sun delicately shone through his ears and fingers ; often he would sigh, then open his mouth with a convulsive gasp ; he looked like an angel in pain. Beatrice disturbed, said to him :

“ Of what are you thinking, my dear Virgilio ? ”

“ I think it would have been a great charity never to have let me come into the world ! ”

“ Ah ! Virgilio ! ”

“ And as there is no remedy, it would be better to go out of it soon.”

“ To go out of it ! and why ? ”

“ Why should I stay in it ? My heart has been dead for some time within me, and when the heart is dead, oh, how sad it is that the body should survive it ! ”



"You can hardly be said to have come to life, my brother, and yet you speak words of despair ; this is not right ; live and be happy, you do not know beside what roses fortune may have in store for you."

"Roses ! Fortune ! Death is now gathering the flowers for the garland of my coffin. Fortune left me the day that we lost our mother."

"But we cannot call ourselves quite orphans ; has not the lady Lucrezia always shown us a mother's love ?"

"Yes ; but she is not our mother."

"And, then, have you not got me who love you so much ?"

"Yes, yes, good sister," replied the boy, throwing his arms around her neck, crying bitterly ; "but even you are not my mother."

"And, beside me, have you not brothers ? have you not a father ?"

"A father—who ?"

Beatrice, struck by the sudden change of the boy, at these words became silent. And only with hesitating voice, after a long silence, added :

"Is not Francesco Cenci your father—and mine ?"

The boy leaned down his head, shut his eyes, crossed his arms, and with low voice replied :

"Sister, look at my forehead, near the roots of my hair ; do you see the scar there ? You do see it ? Do you know who hurt me there ? I never have told it, but now that I am so near dying I will tell you. Thinking to myself how Francesco Cenci despised me, and often looked angrily at me without a cause, I one day took courage to kneel at his feet and try to kiss his hand. He cried out, 'Go away, bastard !' and struck me so violently with his fist on the breast, that he sent me furiously against the corner of a wardrobe which he has in his study. Francesco Cenci saw me fainting, and covered with blood ; he



saw me, but did not raise me. Hence the wound, and hence the sickness, which is killing me."

Beatrice shuddered, without being able to utter a word. The boy, with increasing warmth, loosed his sleeve, and uncovering a thin arm, showed it to his sister :

"Look," he added, "at the mark of this bite. Do you know who did that ? Nero ; and hear how. One day, in the garden, I picked a fine peach, and said, 'I will give this to my father, perhaps it will please him.' With this idea I went to his room, opened the door, and saw he was reading. Fearful of disturbing him, I approached softly, when Nero jumped upon me and bit my arm ; I screamed with pain ; my father laughed."

The bosom of Beatrice beat ready to burst.

"And if it had not been for Marzio, he would have let me be torn to pieces. Look here, also," and the boy, parting his hair from the top of his head, continued, "see this bare spot ? A lock of hair is wanting. Do you know who pulled it out ? My father ! A little while after my fall against the wardrobe, with my head still bound up, overcome by a feeling of despair, I went resolutely to my father, and said, 'Father, how have I offended you ? Why do you hate me ? Bless me in the name of God—bless the child who loves you.' He, taking a lock of my hair in his fingers, answered me thus—listen, with these very words : 'If you had a head of sulphur and my words were fire, I would bless you to burn you. Go, viper, since I hate you, you must hate me. I do not know what to do with your love, bastard !' And he pulled my hair so hard, that it seemed as if the scalp would be torn off with the great pain ; the lock remained in his hand, and the heartless man, infuriated, as if he, and not I, felt the pain, added, 'I curse you and your children, if ever you have any ; may they all live in misery, be nourished with crime, and die on the scaffold.' Now, tell me, Beatrice, can I wish to live ? My mother has left me ; my father has cursed me ; is it

not better I should die ? Am I not right, sister ?” and the boy sighed convulsively.

His sorrows could not be consoled. Beatrice felt it, and was silent ; her forehead was covered with perspiration, and the increasing drops fell fast as tears from weeping eyes. Having passed some time in painful silence, Beatrice, repressing the feelings which flowed from her heart, endeavored to comfort him with soft voice :

“Calm yourself, Virgilio ; perhaps you intruded at an unseasonable time.”

“No ; he was not busy.”

“Perhaps disturbed by some secret care.”

“No ; he was joyful—after the dog had bitten me, he began to play with him—with the dog who had been ready to tear his child to pieces ! Now I do not love him any longer. When I see him, I tremble all over ; his voice makes my head ache. I often see, in my mind, a dark place, not very distant, from whence issues a noise of blasphemies and wicked imprecations ; and a restless voice whispers in my ear, ‘that is the dwelling of hatred—you are expected there !’ I don’t wish to go ; I don’t want to hate anybody—much less my father. I would rather die.”

Beatrice turned pale, and felt as if she were about to faint ; but her strong will subduing her nature, she conquered her feelings, and raising her eyes to heaven, she tried to speak, but could not ; instead of a voice, a sigh escaped from her weary bosom. She waited awhile, and then, with a voice which she tried to render soft, said :

“My dear Virgilio, let us not despair ; let us pray the Eternal Father to inspire milder feelings towards us in the mind of our father.”

“Oh, Beatrice, do you think I have not prayed for him ? How many times I have done it ! The night before the day in which Francesco Cenci pushed me from him and hurt my head, I rose

quietly from my bed in my night clothes, and went barefooted to our chapel, and kneeling before the relics of St. Felix, protector of our family, I prayed him with all my soul to soften our father's heart, and induce him to return with a little love the great affection we bear him. You see ! how the saint listened to me ?”

Pausing awhile, he then thoughtfully added :

“ But I know that God listened to another prayer of mine, and it was when I rose a second time from my bed, and knelt before the miraculous crucifix, and said : ‘ Have mercy, oh Divine Redeemer, upon me, and either bestow upon me my father's love, or call me to thy peace.’ At these words Jesus bowed his head, as if to answer, ‘ Your prayer will be granted.’ ”

“ He will grant all our prayers, inspiring our father's heart with kindness.”

“ I am sure he has listened to my second prayer, though not to the first ; for when I went to bed again, a distinct voice called to me, ‘ Virgilio ! Virgilio !’ I got up, opened the door, but saw no one ; I returned to my bed, again the voice cried, ‘ Virgilio ! Virgilio !’ Sure that I was not deceived, I answered, ‘ Who calls me ?’ And the voice replied, ‘ I call to you from heaven.’ ‘ I am ready, my God ;’ but the voice said, ‘ No ; your hour is not yet come—but it is approaching.’ ”

“ These are fancies, caused by fever ; come, cheer up, don't be conquered by sadness ; I want to see you happy.”

“ Why do you call them fancies ? Do you not read in the Holy Bible even, that the Lord caused his voice to be heard by Samuel ? Last night, my eyes being open, I saw my room all at once filled with light ; and a beautiful woman entered, dressed in blue and sparkling with gems ; she came near my bed, bent her face to mine, kissed me on the forehead, and disappeared ; her lips were like ice, and the chill struck to my brain. Do you wish to know, Beatrice, whom this lady looked like ? She resembled the portrait of our mother which hangs in the great

hall. Everything speaks to me of death. Do I not also feel that I gradually fail, like a candle burnt to its socket? Life is going from all my pores. Look at these thin hands, white as marble; look at my nails of a bluish color; look, too, in the middle of my forehead, and see the distinct mark, where death has imprinted his kiss." And he could say no more.

Just at this moment a bird lighted to rest his tired wings upon the railing of the *parterre*; he turned his head now here, now there, as if suspicious of harm; but taking courage, began to fly about and pick; finally, he seemed to gaze at the boy; then warbled a sweet note, spread his wings, and flew away.

"Oh!" said Virgilio, "how I wish I could follow him! he knows his father, and his mother, from an open branch, are looking anxiously for his return. Oh, my mother! Beatrice, tell me where our mother is now?"

"Our mother? she is above, in heaven."

"I know it, her soul lives with the just; but I should like to know where her body lies. Can you tell me, Beatrice? Count Cenci never would permit me to be carried to the grave of my mother."

Beatrice, endeavoring to turn the sad conversation to less sorrowful subjects, rose readily to satisfy the boy's desire, and seating him upon the parapet of the terrace, she leaned forward, saying:

"There, beyond those hills, is a rich estate, which our mother brought as dowry to Francesco Cenci—a church is dedicated there to the holy apostles Peter and Paul. In this church, within a marble tomb, on the right hand of the entrance, by the wall, lies the body of our blessed mother."

And raising her arm, she pointed to the place; but leaning with all her body forward, it happened a letter and a picture fell from her bosom, and dropped into the garden.

"Oh, *Dio*, my secret!" cried the girl, with loud voice, and blushing.

Francesco Cenci, hidden behind a thicket of laurels, had stood a long time gazing so fixedly at these two beings, that he seemed as if wishing to poison them with his gaze. Hardly did he see the picture and letter fall, than he rushed in haste to pick them up ; not so quickly, however, as his desire urged him, since his lameness impeded him. Beatrice, in great fright, saw him, and repeated :

“ Oh, my secret, my secret ! I would give my life to save it !”

The boy, turning from her who looked as pale as death, saw the old man. Then, resolutely and boldly, and with a desperate effort, grasping the cornice of the terrace, leaped into the garden, and quick as lightning, recovered both letter and picture.

“ Come here !” screamed the old man in a rage. “ Come here ! bring me those things !”

And as Virgilio, pretending not to hear him, took his way to the terrace, the Count more enraged, roared :

“ Cursed viper ! Bring me that paper, or, as soon as I reach you, I will tear your heart from your body with my own hands.”

The boy urged faster his steps. The Count, blind with passion, cried :

“ Nero, Nero ! quick, at him ”—and with both hands set the dog upon his son.

The dog rushed furiously after him, but in vain, for the boy, although he had run some distance, seemed already to feel the mastiff's teeth in his flesh, and had put wings to his feet—he did not run, but flew. He ascended two or three steps at a time, and panting for breath, his strength exhausted, fell, depositing the letter and picture at the feet of Beatrice. She put both quickly in her bosom.

A moment after, the dog rushed barking upon the terrace—his eyes like fire, his breath like smoke. Beatrice, scarcely knowing what to do, turned her head round, and seeing within a



niche a trophy of ancient weapons, placed there as an ornament to the terrace, she seized a sword and stood before her fallen brother. The mastiff, with head bent down, plunges on as if to tear him. The courageous girl, watching her chance, aimed such a powerful blow, that penetrating his flesh, it stabbed him to the heart. The dog rolling in his own blood, expired with a painful yell.

A new and heavier danger now menaced them. Francesco Cenci advanced madly with a dagger in his hand : stammering with rage, he cried :

“ Where is the cursed viper ? Who killed my dog Nero ? Who, I say ? ”

“ I ! ”

“ You also, then ; but first of all, this viper ! ”

And he leaned towards his son as if to stab him. Beatrice, raising the bloody sword, and pointing it to his breast, said, with an expression impossible to describe :

“ Father, don’t come near ! ”

“ Wicked girl ! Away, I say ! ” and he tried to reach the unfortunate child.

Beatrice, with a voice wonderfully composed, repeated :

“ Father, do not come near ! ”

At this voice, which contained both a deep prayer and a menace, Francesco Cenci stood still to look at her.

Where is now the girl of so sweet a countenance ? Her eyes dilated in a strange manner, seemed to send forth fire, her expanded nostrils quivered, her lips compressed, her bosom heaving, her hair floating loosely on her shoulders, her left foot planted firmly in an advancing attitude, her body straight, her left hand shut, and the right, by her side holding the sword pointed, as if to attack. Neither painter nor sculptor could ever figure this wonderful image, nor words describe her. As the girl appeared few could be able to sustain her look. To compare her

to the Cherubim, who defended with flaming sword the gate of Eden after the fall of Adam, would be to say but little ; for we cannot tell how the Cherubim looked ; but she was as even now the Roman girl appears, who remembers she is a descendant of Clelia. Francesco Cenci was astonished ; he stood looking at her as if in ecstasy, then let fall his hand, and threw away the dagger ; his soul for the moment seemed quiet. Beatrice also threw away her sword. The old man stretched towards her his opened arms, exclaiming tenderly :

“ How beautiful you are, my child ! Oh, why do you not love me ? ”

“ I ? I will love you,” and she threw her arms around his neck.

The father and daughter were bound in a holy embrace.

But good feelings lasted only like lightning in the breast of the wicked old man. He experienced in one feeling of humanity the same fear that others feel for remorse. Again appear the signs of crime ; his eyes compressed, his eyelids trembled with that sinister smile which caused one to shudder ; he smoothed her hair, pressed her by the shoulders, kissed and rekissed her, and approaching his lips to her ear, whispered a single word.

Beatrice, with pale face, looked down, shook herself loosely from her father's embrace, took to her bosom the prostrate boy, and in going away cast upon Francesco Cenci a long look—a thunderbolt of contempt, which had the power to freeze the blood in the veins of him who neither feared man nor God.

For a long time he stood immovable, deeply buried in thought ; a furious tempest was waging war within his soul. But the voice of sin conquered the roaring of the storm ; the voice of virtue was desperate and lost, like that of a shipwreck. What thoughts revolved in his mind ? Why did he doubt ? What did he propose to do ? Who knows ? Perhaps the devil himself, if he had seen the hell in the soul of Francesco Cenci, would have turned



his face elsewhere frightened. But it is to be believed that in that whirlwind of wicked thoughts, he chose the worst ; for striking with force his hand to his head, he murmured between his teeth :

“ Now, how comes it, that I, who would presume to command the day when it appears on the horizon : ‘ Back ! you shall shine when I give you leave ! ’ Find myself checked in my path by less than a wisp of straw, by the will of a girl. Ah, miserable creature ! Can glass resist the hammer of the smith ? Everything has as yet yielded to the grasp of my iron hand, and you, too, shall yield, or I will crush you body and soul.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS.

"E Balneum in mezzo."—PETRARCA, *Sonetti*.

"Tanto egli odiava questi suoi figliuoli, che aveva fatto nel cortile del suo palazzo una chiesa dedicata a San Tommaso, col solo pensiero di seppellirveli tutti."—NOVATI, *Storia*.

THE Church of St. Thomas, the property of the Cenci, although somewhat changed from what it used to be, still exists. It is said to be a very ancient building and once bore the name, "*De Fraternitate*," and also in *Capite Mola*, or *Molarum*. This fact is obtained from the Bull of Pope Urban III. to the canons of St. Lorenzo in Damaso. They afterwards called it in *Capite Molarum*, because it stood near the mill of Regola, where the Tiber remained drained until the year 1775, and *De Fraternitate*, and also *Romanæ Fraternitatis Caput*, perhaps because in this church the first brotherhood was established, from which afterwards the other confraternities of Rome derived their example, and title. Tradition says that Cincio, Bishop of Sabina, consecrated its altar in 1113, Julius III. granted it in jurisdiction to Rocco Cenci in 1554, with the obligation of restoring it, which he was not able to fulfill on account of his death; hence, Pius IV., in 1565, sent again the Bull of investiture in favor of Francesco Cenci, son of Christopher, imposing on him the same charge, which he fulfilled, as the following inscription placed on the outer wall of the church testifies:

"Franciscus Cincius Christophori filius  
Et Ecclesiæ patronus, Templum hoc  
Rebus ad divinum cultum et ornatum,  
Necessariis ad perpetuam  
Rel memoriam exornari ac perfici,  
Curavit. Anno Jubilei, 1575."

That inscription testified to the passers by how great was the piety of Count Francesco Cenci ! Thus trustworthy do we always find all epitaph-inscriptions, official newspapers, and funeral orations of the chaplains of the Court. This church is almost square in form. Built with a mixture of the Doric order, it presented that miserable degradation of art which architects call *barocco*. It contains five chapels ; its roof like a cross, where even now may be seen the escutcheon of the Cenci, which has for design a square field divided in four, alternately red and white, with three red moons in the white, and three white in the red fields. On the great altar is an oil painting of the sixth century, or perhaps a little before ; it is of a good school, and represents St. Thomas touching the wound of Jesus. On the left of the altar is still seen a painted crucifix, the work of the twelfth century, and to this Virgilio alluded in his conversation with Beatrice.

This church on the 10th of August appeared all dressed in mourning ; black cloth hung on the walls, garlands of flowers were seen mixed with cypress boughs : seven sepulchres of black marble awaited the dead, like open mouths greedy of water. All bore the same inscription, and it was this :

"Mors parata, vita contempta."

The eighth sepulchre was conspicuous above the others, and of beautiful white marble, with the following inscription :

Si charitem, caritatemque quæris  
Hic intus jacent.  
Non ingratus herus  
Neroni cani benemerentissimo,  
Franciscus de Cincis hoc titulum  
Ponere curavit."

In the middle of the church was a catafalque covered with crimson velvet, embroidered with gold, also covered with fresh flowers. Around the catafalque burned six wax candles, upon silver candlesticks worked with wonderful skill.

A chorus of priests, dressed in dalmatics of black damask, awaited the dead, in order to chant the funeral service. Before long, measured steps were heard, and a little after, from the side door appeared a little bier carried by two men and two women.

Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci held the handles in front, Lucrezia Petroni, second wife of Count Cenci, and Beatrice held those behind.

The dead person was Virgilio. God had granted the second part of the unhappy boy's prayer : he slept in peace.

Several servants followed, magnificently dressed in mourning, with lighted torches. One might observe, not without grief mixed with wonder, that the clothes of the servants were by far much better than those of Giacomo or Bernardino ; Giacomo's particularly, were so worn out as to shame the poorest gentleman in Rome. His hair was disordered, his beard long, his sleeves and collar unclean ; he carried his head humbly bent down, his forehead was wrinkled, his cheeks pale and thin ; he shed bitter tears from his burning eyes, and one could see the beating of his heart outside his garment. Two contrary passions shone on his countenance : pity and ill-suppressed rage. Bernardino also wept, but as if from imitation, rather than from impulse : for he had become entirely stupid at heart, his mind was so darkened by fear of his father, and the ignorance in which the latter chose to keep him. Lucrezia, although a stepmother, wept bitterly ; being, however, more bigoted than devout, she was easily and readily resigned, taking misfortune patiently, and attributing to the will of God every good or bad event of her life.

For my own part, I praise fortitude, which is like a ballast

that keeps in equilibrium the ship through the storm of life ; I believe also that of things of daily occurrence, many happen through necessity ; but when religious ideas tend to sweeten the heart, then this insensibility is no virtue ; it resembles the threshold of death too much ; man, while he lives, must live with his passions. I know that some call passions contrary winds to a quiet life, hyenas, lions, and other roaring animals, seeking whom they may devour. Mark Antony was seen in the streets of Alexandria seated upon a car drawn by lions. If this simile is proper or not, it matters little, but people should be persuaded of this, that if man can tame wild beasts, and govern the storms, how much more easily can he rule the passions ; he should rule and not let himself become as stone.

Francesco Cenci married this woman because she was said to be very religious, and because having once exclaimed on a certain occasion after hearing of his wickedness, " Lord ! I would rather marry the devil himself than Count Cenci !" After that, he began to pay his court to her ; feigned very exemplary habits ; frequented churches, learned to bend his neck, and raise his hands and eyes to heaven in a very touching manner : and above all, showed himself a generous benefactor to priests, the worthy doorkeepers of heaven. He knew how to tell stories of Saints ; he discussed the *gratia gratis data*, and the form and substance of the sacrament, better than the synodical definer of the Franciscan friars. The lady began to believe he had been slandered. At least could he not have been converted ? Might not the Blessed Virgin have imparted to her the virtue to snatch his soul from the clutches of the devil ? oh ! it is so sweet, so proud a triumph for a devout woman to gain a soul, in opposition to the devil, that, generally speaking, truly pious women are not contented with the first conversion, but work with praiseworthy zeal for the second, and this becomes an impulse for the third ; and if the power lasted as long as the will, there is no doubt

they would sacrifice their entire life in so great and meritorious a work. And for this reason with the advice of her relatives, and considering the great wealth and nobility of the house of Cenci, the lady condescended to accept the Count for her second husband. Hardly had the Count brought the lady Lucrezia to her new home, than he said to her, as if in jest : " You wished to marry the devil rather than me ? I have married you to prove that you were right,"—and he kept his word. Every day he would stand near her desk where she prayed ; and while she recited psalms and counted her beads, he sang obscene and wicked songs : she would open a prayer book, and he the revolting prints of Marcantonio Raimondo, commented upon by Pietro Aretino. He tried to subvert her in all her ideas of religion and morals, to fill her mind with doubts and fears ; but lady Lucrezia would never listen to these deviltries, and often paid no attention to them. Sometimes, when her impious husband, tired of talking, would become silent, she would recommence her prayers : and thus it often happened that Count Cenci, instead of tormenting others, was himself tormented ; instead of urging her to desperation, he would bite his lips with spite, and was nearly crazy with rage. This plan failing he chose another ; he obliged her to listen to his daily crimes : this not irritating her, he filled his house with courtezans ; he did not abstain from words and acts capable of offending her dignity as a woman and a wife ; but she, with unruffled mildness would say : " May God reform you, and pardon as I have pardoned you." Count Cenci could find no way to move her cold and unexcitable nature. Often blinded by passion, he humbled her in presence of the servants, ill-treated her, beat her, made her suffer for want of clothing and food, and often upon her face she carried the marks of his brutal fury. It was lost time ; she suffered all with resignation ; she offered all to the sacred heart of Jesus in punishment for her sins. The Count, growing discouraged with her, ceased



to persecute her, having (wonderful to relate) sooner exhausted his talent of tormenting than her patience ; and thence reputing her stupid, left her as a dead thing, which neither feels torments nor caresses.

Beatrice alone did not weep ; her eyes were fixed on the dead boy, and she senselessly followed the others with mechanical steps. When they reached the catafalque, Beatrice lifted the boy in her arms, and with her own hands arranged him upon it, parted his hair, placed a crucifix on his breast, and a bunch of violets ; then pushing a little aside one of the candle sticks, with her face leaning on her hand, she rested her elbow on the corner of the catafalque, still gazing on the face of the child.

A servant looked fixedly at Beatrice, with eyes like fire, and sometimes he would start : it was Marzio.

Besides the four children mentioned, Count Cenci had three others. Christopher and Felix, whom he had sent to Salamanca to study, and a girl Olimpia. She was very skillful and bold, and not being able to stand the persecutions of her father any longer, wrote a memorial, in which she exhibited with great skill, serious charges against her father ; and then, in spite of the domestic prison in which she was confined, managed so well that it succeeded in reaching the hands of His Holiness ; she requested him to deign to place her in a convent until she could be provided for by an honest marriage. The careful girl revealed only the most credible and easily proved of her father's infamies, justly believing that enormities so much above ordinary ones, would obtain less credit ; for the incredible, although true, might give discredit to the probable ones ; thinking also that a child appealing against her father for her own safety, should never pass the limits of necessity ; too warm a defence in this case might degenerate into open offence, and cause a suspicion that the accuser might be moved by an unnatural hatred

against her own blood. The Pope, admiring the moderation of the young girl, did not hesitate to aid her, and caused her to be removed from her father's house to a convent, and in a short time married her to Count Carlo Gabbrielli, a worthy gentleman of Gubbio, to whom the Pope obliged Count Cenci to pay a suitable dower. The records of that time relate that Count Cenci maddened by her success, even went so far as to promise ten thousand crowns to any one, who would give again into his hands his hated daughter either alive or dead ; but the Pope was more powerful than he, and Cenci, for this once, was compelled to swallow the bit. Not being able to revenge himself upon the fugitive, he increased his persecutions upon the children who remained at home ; and so much did grief consume his soul, that often, like Augustus when he had lost his army at Varo, he was seen wandering through the halls of his palace, clasping his hands, or leaning his feverish head against some pillar, exclaiming :

"Ah ! Pope, Pope ! give me back Olimpia. Princes, priests, and fathers should sustain each other at any cost, and always, if they would keep their authority revered and feared in the world."

The priests celebrated their holy office with the exactitude of our soldiers when they load their guns in twelve movements, and with nearly as much enthusiasm. Beatrice heard nothing, saw nothing ; only when the priest sprinkled the catafalque with holy water, a drop from the head of the little dead boy flew up on her face. She shuddered, looked more gloomy, and sighed.

"I accept the omen !"

"To die ; it is not your turn !"

These words suddenly fell upon the ears of Beatrice, as if they had come from the catafalque ; she turned her head quickly, but no one was near. The crowd of servants and monks fol-

lowed the priests from the church ; then gradually the people from the neighborhood disappeared. The Cencis remained alone with the dead. Good hearted people weep easily at others misfortunes ; but it lasts only for a short time, for their own consume all their tears, and sometimes are not enough.

All were kneeling, with heads bent down, with hands clasped, and arms down by their side. Beatrice alone, who had never left her first position, suddenly raised her head, and with eyes askance looked upon these afflicted ones, and with an imperious gesture, exclaimed :

“ Why do you weep ? Rise ! Do you know who has killed our brother ? You know, yes ; but you are afraid to think of his name even in your mind. That which you dare not think in secret, I will reveal in a loud voice : his father killed him ; our father, Francesco Cenci.”

Those kneeling moved not, only their sobbing was increased.

“ Rise up, I command you ; we need something more than tears ! We must provide for our own safety, and soon, if we would not have our father murder us all.”

“ Peace, my daughter, peace ; it is wicked to allow ourselves to be conquered by anger,” replied Lucrezia ; “ come and kneel down, and submit yourself to the will of God.”

“ What do you say, Lady Lucrezia ? You believe you serve God, and you blaspheme. To listen to you, it would seem that God has created water to drown us, fire to burn us, and the iron to wound us. Where have you read that the duty of parents is to torment their children, the duty of children to be tormented ? Is there no limit beyond which opposition would be allowable ? Is any rebellion unlawful ? Has nature marked on the forehead of generations, ‘ suffer and be silent ? ’ Is there anything worse than murdering one’s own child ? Tell me, for I know many, but perhaps not all the iniquities which are committed under the sun. Three things I know cannot be numbered : the stars in

heaven, the wicked thoughts in the heart of man, and the agonies of the desperate ; perhaps there are more ; tell them to me. Lady Lucrezia, you loved poor Virgilio but little !”

“ How ! I did not love him ? This poor child was as dear to me as if he had been my own.”

“ Truly ? These words are easily said, but in reality it is not so. A mother’s love cannot be imagined. If you had brought him forth, nursed him in your bosom, you would not weep now—you would rave. But what wonder if the voice of one’s own blood is no longer heard among men, when it is not even heard in heaven. The cry of Abel would no more reach to day the presence of the Avenger. Why is this ? Has the Eternal Father grown weary and closed his ears, or has the cry of blood become more feeble ? But if Heaven is of bronze, my heart is still flesh, and groans, and raves, and beats, like the virgin hearts of our first parents. And you, Giacomo, who are a man, do not you feel anything here ?” and the girl struck her left side.

“ Oh, Beatrice !” answered a voice from the floor—it was Giacomo Cenci—“ I am no more what I used to be ; the better part of me is dead ; I seem hardly a shadow—a memory of my former self. Look at me—is this the bearing of a young man of twenty-five ? What can I do against fate ? I have struggled more than you think, with the desperation of necessity. I have bit it until my teeth have crumbled : if you could understand it !”

“ But the hand can find a club, and behold a lever capable of throwing down a tower ; it can also find iron, and behold a hammer to break, a sword to clear the way before it ; and then friendship multiplies heads and hands.”

“ Misfortune, my sister, is like a December night ; it surrounds you with so much darkness, that you neither see others nor others you.”

“ Raise your voice in the darkness ; relatives, at least, will recognize it. It is said the worst relative is worth the best friend.”

“There are misfortunes, as there are diseases, which neither the virtue of wisdom nor of medicine, can remedy. I do not deny piety, relationship, love—I deny nothing—but all these, in the hands of the powerful, are weapons able to strike ; in the hands of the weak, become glass to cut him with. For see, sister, how great is the misery to which I am reduced. I have no clothes to wear ; I am in want even of linen ; I have no means by which to keep my person clean, which, of all others, is most humiliating to a gentleman. This would be but a small grief, if it would afflict me alone ; I have four children, and am often in want of bread to sustain them. Of the two thousand ducats a year which my father is obliged to pay me by decree of the Pope, with great difficulty he gives me but an eighth part of it ; he denies me the interest of my wife’s dowry ; and often, on returning home, I find my children without clothes, my wife weeping, and asking for bread. ‘Ah ! what can I give you ? Come, and eat my flesh !’ Yes, that is a splendid repast ! My flesh, dried up by continual fasting, and burnt with fever ! I fly from my house, to rid myself of their cries ; but desperation goes with me, and winds about my life with its horrible snaky curves, and its poisoned teeth sting my heart.’

“Why do you not have recourse to the Pope ? Olimpia did so, and with success.”

“Have I not had recourse to him ? I threw myself at his feet ; wet the floor with my tears ; I prayed for my children, for you, and for myself ; I exposed, one by one, the enormities of our father ; I did not hide the most secret and infamous ones ; I begged him, by that God which he presumes to represent on earth, to bring a quick and efficacious remedy to it. The austere old man was not moved, he did not stir ; I seemed as if praying to the bronze statue of St. Peter, whose feet are worn out by kisses ; but always cold. He listened to me with a stony face ; he fixed his grey, dull eyes on mine ; then slowly pronounced



these words, which fell on my soul like snow-flakes : ‘ Woe to the children who proclaim their father’s shame ! For this Cain was cursed. Shem and Japhet, who, on the contrary, were reverent to their father were blessed, and their generations inhabited the tabernacles of Canaan. Is it anywhere read that Isaac murmured against Abraham ? Did Jephtha’s daughter go up to the mountains to curse her father ? Fathers represent God on this earth. If you had reverently held down your face to worship him, you would not have seen your father’s sins, and would not accuse him. Go in peace.’ And so saying, dismissed me from his presence. Now, you see clearly ; Olimpia, adopting the same means, was able to find favor in the eyes of the Pope ; I, instead, found indifference and disdain. This is fate that so wills it. What can man do against fate ?”

“ He can die.”

“ Yes ! But you have no children, Beatrice ; you have no husband, as I have a loving and beloved wife. If I was not a father, who knows how long ago my body might have been fished out at Ostia ; but some day, too well I see, this will be the only way to free myself from this daily and insupportable desperation. It truly seems as if I were swimming against the current of a river, and the strength of my arms by degrees failing and my feet becoming more heavy. Oh ! if you but knew how often, when I pass near the Tiber, the roaring of the water which breaks against the stones of the bridge seems to say, ‘ How long you delay !’ But, surely, it must end thus—even Beatrice advises me to it—a watery grave !”

Beatrice, at Giacomo’s words, changed color many times, an internal power apparently seemed urging her to speak ; still she paused, until regaining a sad tranquillity, she bent her head, and extending her hand towards Giacomo, quietly said :

“ Wickedness overflows the earth like the universal deluge ! Brother, I have spoken foolish words—forgive and forget them.



Arise now ; he who bends himself too much to the earth, his advice will partake too much of the mud. Come, be a man. In the impetuosity of my grief I distrusted the mercy of God ; He has pardoned me, for I feel peace descending into my soul—fore-runner of good counsel.”

“ Among altars and tombs you conspire here ?”

A shudder ran through the veins of the Cencis ; they turned their frightened faces, and saw the old Count, as if he had risen from the pavement, his face livid, dressed in black, with the crimson hood the patrician Romans used to wear upon his head. The aspect of the fierce old man was calm with fearful tranquillity ; impenetrable and sinister, like that of the Sphinx. They pressed together and were silent, not daring to raise their eyes ; like birds remaining quiet and still under the leaves at the approach of the falcon, thinking not to be seen. Beatrice alone stood firm and resolute before him.

“ The Saints are witnesses how excellent children plot the death of their wicked father. Come on—who holds you back ? come. What do you fear ? What resistance can an old unarmed man and alone make to you ? The place is suitable—God present—the altar prepared—the victim ready. Where is your weapon, miserable ones ?”

And as all, taken by surprise, were dumb, Count Cenci, with calm voice, continued :

“ Ah ! you dare not—my eyes frighten you ? not one of you has courage enough to look into my eyes ! Poor children ! Come, if you do not know, I will teach you the way to fulfill your design with entire safety, with all the cowardice of which you are capable. When the night is still, and your father—Francesco Cenci—I, in fact, sleep—then my eyes will not frighten you—thrust hastily a well pointed knife—a dagger well sharpened by you between two rosaries—here—under the left breast—you see how easily it can penetrate. An old man’s life is a

thread, the hand of a child even—the claw of this spider—may cut it,” and so saying, he raised the little hand of the dead child, and let it fall with infinite contempt.

And as some of them, horrified, hid their faces, the Count, with the same horrible irony, continued :

“ I understand—even by your silence you let yourselves be understood. For you my death is not enough—you wish to enjoy the fruit of your crime. It is well ; to me also the honor of our family is of consequence. Nor would I desire that my name should be stained ; the crime is nothing. Hear me, then : we are among relatives—I see no one to betray us—give me a poisoned drink, which will make me sleep ; Nature’s kingdom is fertile in plants that have such a virtue ! O Nature ! *alma parens*, from the first day of creation, thou didst foresee, by producing so many poisonous plants, the future necessities and desires of sons like these, who issued from me good and affectionate. Most provident mother ! You see I would not advise you to throw me down from the balconies, unless they were very high ; for one thrown from there rarely dies at once, and the power of suffering might then draw from me a secret, which the heart would in vain strive to hide. You might also—yes, by St. Felix, patron of our family, this seems a truly royal and imperial idea—you may imitate King Manfred, who, if he cannot be praised as a saint, can neither be called a demon, as Dante put him into purgatory ; and this fact will explain it to you. Manfred was impatient to inherit the kingdom of Sicily, and his father the Emperor Frederic, was not at all impatient to die : what was to be done ? The lives of fathers are in contradiction with those of heirs. There are those who profess to aid a birth—what harm is there then in aiding death ? Taking all into consideration, who knows whether we should thank most the doctor of the first or the doctor of the second ; and if cowardice did not hold the mouth of the bag of life, desire would not be conquered by

despair. But come, putting this aside—I pity your impatience, and pray you to pardon my prosiness ; if for nothing else but in remuneration of the lesson, in order to be rid of it forever. Manfred was reading by the bedside of his father ; the old man’s eyes had become heavy ; he fell into such a deep sleep that only a light breathing showed his life—a breath hardly enough to darken a glass, to move a feather, or the ripple of a brook lost in the sand. The father was wrong in keeping it ; the son was not obliged to respect it—in short, a breath like mine. Manfred took a little pillow from under his father’s head, and placed it upon it—a thing, you see, of no importance—a movement, *a quo*, as grammarians would say ; then he jumped on the bed, and with both his knees, pressed upon his breast, and with both his hands upon his nostrils and mouth, and there he remained, until he had lost a father for whom he cared nothing at all, and acquired a crown for which he cared a great deal.”

“Horrible ! horrible !” exclaimed Beatrice.

“Horrible !” repeated the others, frightened.

“And what ! do you fear ? You are afraid to burn your fingers with the coals of hell, and presume to act the part of devils in this world ? Do you not know, that to be devils one must swim carelessly through a sea of fire, and laugh among torments ? Then may man be called courageous, and be able to wash his hands in blood as he does his lips with wine, and say, even in presence of God : ‘I have no sin.’ Butterflies ! You think to commit crimes by the flutter of your wings ? Leave the cruel part of Satan to me, for I feel myself wicked in the plenitude of my power. Look at these seven sepulchres ; I have prepared them for you, for Olimpia, Christopher and Felix—you do not find mine there, as I mean to die after you. Oh, God, whom I know not, neither do I know if thou art—if thou wishest one worshipper more, who would confess thee, as Moses saw thee, a powerful and jealous persecutor of the fourth and

fifth generations of those that hate thee, grant me the power of being able to assist in the agonies of all these children of mine ; to close their eyes and bury them in these tombs ; and then I swear as a gentleman of honor to burn my palace, and make a bonfire of it ; and if thou canst not grant this to me, behold, I consent to die before them, on condition that power will be given me to stretch my hand from out my grave, and draw them to it by a bloody death. But thou dost not listen, but sleepest on thy celestial wings a golden sleep. I will provide for myself, and it is better so ; since man while his breath lasts should confide the thoughts of his revenge to no one, not even to God. Go ! free me from your hated presence ! Go !”

And with his hand he waved them from him ; but, at once changing his mind, ran after Giacomo, and seizing him by the left arm, obliged him to turn back ; then looking at him, and drawing nearer, said :

“ You complained that you have no linen, lazy fellow ! Go to your mother’s tomb, open it, and take away the winding sheet in which she is wrapped, and carry it to your wife to make shirts for your children. So may it, like that of Nessus, reduce them all to ashes ! Tell her to spare two pieces, one to cover your face, when you have died by an evil death, and the other to dry her tears, if she should be so foolish as to shed any for so vile, so abject, so contemptible a man as you are.”

“ For God’s sake, let me go, Count !” cried Giacomo, trembling and shuddering, while with all his might he tried to loosen the grasp of the fierce old man.

“ No, I will not let you go, until I have taught you a way to procure what is necessary for your support. You want bread for your children ? Carry home a handful of your mother’s dust and fill their mouths. Snakes are fed on earth. Or rather, go and carry them my curse, of which I make them an irrevocable gift. *Inter vivos*—you will scatter it upon their youthful heads—be

of good cheer, it will not fall upon stones, neither upon thorns—do not turn your face—I tell you the truth ; it is a custom in our family for the children to hate their father ; from the devil we sprung, to the devil we return. The seed of the curse which you shall scatter, shall be given back multiplied to you in the time of harvest. Between you and your wife let there be henceforth no other words than those of hatred and strife. May she repulse you from her bed, and contaminate it. May your life be a torment, your death a relief.”

And more he would have added, if Giacomo had not, by a violent effort, freed his arm, and fled, covering his ears with his hands.

“Go, go,” continued the old man ; “you shut your ears in vain ; my words partake of the nature of the wounds of my seraphic patron, St. Francis : my words burn the flesh, pierce the bones—even after death their mark may still be distinguished.”

Lucrezia and Bernardino ran all trembling after Giacomo ; Beatrice remained alone, immovable, at the head of the catafalque.

“And do you not tremble ?” asked her father.

Beatrice, without answering, turned with devout air and clasped hands towards the altar, and said :

“Most Holy Crucified One, have mercy upon that poor soul.”

“Fool ! Why dost thou speak of Crucifix ? Here is neither a Christ nor God.”

“Silence, old man ! Know that in one moment you may appear before his tribunal ; and he alone—he alone can pardon and save you.”

The old man laughed ; and his evil genius counselled him to say between his teeth :

“Do you wish a proof that neither a Christ nor a God exists ? Behold it.”



And ascending the altar steps, he struck violently with his fist the marble tablet, exclaiming :

“ Christ, if thou art upon this altar, consecrated by a holy bishop, as they say, but which I do not believe, before thy table, in the presence of the wafer within which the stupidity of believers has confined thee, I deny thee ten times one hundred. I confess my sin of not having offended thee enough until now, and I firmly intend, henceforth, to offend thee in thoughts, deeds, and omissions ; with all the faculties of my body, all the strength of my will, and all the powers of my soul. If thou knowest how, and canst, turn me to ashes. I defy thee to strike me with thy thunderbolt.”

Here he bent his head upon the altar, and waiting awhile, cried three times : “ Dost thou hear ? ”

At last, he boldly raised his wicked head ; his limbs trembled, but not his soul. He looked at his daughter. The half closed eyes gradually contracted, and he smiled, the smile of a viper ; he advanced menacingly towards her, who awaited him without moving, and with hasty words said :

“ What is God ? *Deus erat verbum* : God is a word—nothing but a word ; and St. John said it. This dead boy is not dead ” (and with his hand he touched the dead child on the head). “ Beings change their form, they are never destroyed. Matter existed before creation, and will endure after the destruction of the world. From this corpse will be born thousands of the living, and they, dying, will give birth to others. Perpetual change of life and death, that is all. The true wisdom, daughter of my heart, true wisdom, you understand me, consists in deriving the greatest sum of pleasures in the form which nature has at present gifted us with. Come, Beatrice, I love you only—you are the splendor of my life—you ”——

And as if urged by some diabolical frenzy, the sinful old man approached her, had almost thrown his arms madly round her ;



the horrified girl started back, and pushing towards him the catafalque, exclaimed :

“ Between you and me, I place your murdered boy.”

The catafalque thus pushed, fell over, carrying with it the garland of flowers, the little child, and several lighted candles ; which falling in a heap on Count Cenci, knocked him down upon the ground. The head of the corpse struck against the head of the old man ; the cold lips of one touched the lips of the other ; the flaxen hair of the boy, and the white hair of the old man were mixed together. One of the lighted tapers set on fire the living and dead hair ; the spreading flame burns at the same moment the cheek and temple of Virgilio and those of the Count ; from both escaped the disagreeable smell of burnt flesh ; but one alone felt the pain. The old Count, shaking himself like a snake that has been trodden upon, screamed with inexpressible agony, “ The dead burns me !”

With a desperate effort he freed himself from the body ; succeeded in sitting up, and then with difficulty rose to his feet. Oh, how horrible did Count Cenci look ! His burnt hair still smoking ; his cheek and temple swollen by the fire ; the pupils of his eyes hidden beneath the eyebrows, so that the white of his eyes, bloodshot and of a yellowish color, was alone discernible : he trembled convulsively in all his limbs.

“ Ah, Francesco Cenci !” he murmured grinding his teeth ; “ you are afraid ! Coward ! you are afraid ! A girl and a dead boy have frightened you—now I see that you have really become old !”

Beatrice had disappeared. The old man, staggering, retired to his own room, deep in thoughts of fear and crime.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DESPAIR.

*Che fai? che pensi? a che pur dietro guardi  
Nel tempo, che tornar non puote omai,  
Anima sconsolata!  
Cerchiamo' il ciel, se qui nulla ne piace.*

PETRARCA.

THE sirocco wind blew damp and heavy from the sea, wafting towards Rome clouds upon clouds, which follow one after another, like the horses of the Apocalypse.

The clouds seem pregnant with the wrath of God, for they bring in their bosoms hail, malaria, and, perchance, a thunderbolt for some holy head. Meanwhile, by this evil wind, bodies grow ill and weak; walls and furniture are covered with moisture; your hair is plastered to your cheeks; you are annoyed by a cold perspiration around your neck; the mind is easily roused to anger; words fall on our ears bitterly; the sweetest voice makes us shudder, like the scraping of marbles, or the grating of hinges—infernal inventions! Being shut up, the confinement stifles you; on opening the windows, papers, clothes, and other articles fly in heaps about the house; and the fine dust powders your hair, your linen, and fills your eyes.

On such a night, within a poor room, a husband and wife stood talking; between them was a rough-looking, unpainted table, and on it, burning sadly, like an asthmatic person, one candle, hardly sufficient to light the room, and yet enough to

show their poverty. The man seemed cast down ; his arms were extended upon the table, and his head hung low, like a discouraged person ; the woman seemed reduced by suffering, but had a certain air of Roman fierceness, which was more apparent at that moment, since she seemed to have heard or suffered things which caused her to burn with anger. In reality she was saying, with an impetuous manner :

“ No ; you cannot make me believe such enormities—they are not possible—they would cause the sun to cease shining.”

The man was Giacomo Cenci ; the woman, Luisa Vellia, his wife. Giacomo, as we said before, was hardly twenty-six ; he was rather short and stout in person, generally, but now unusually thin. He had grown up in the school of paternal affliction, and but badly taught in polite discipline, which has the virtue of tempering the passions ; by the force of bad example, he might have been not unlike his father, if love had not inspired in his soul a sweet and powerful affection. He had fallen in love with Luisa Vellia, a pretty and amiable girl of common, though wealthy parentage, and she became attached to him, not because he was of a powerful family, but because he seemed to her very unhappy.

From the marriage of Luisa Vellia with Giacomo Cenci, four children were born, who, from the family papers, I find were named Francesco, Felix, Christopher, and Angelo. They lived in the street of St. Lorenzo Panisperna, in a house certainly far removed from the splendor to which the high birth of Giacomo entitled him ; still it had once been conveniently furnished with all the necessaries requisite for the support of a family ; but Francesco Cenci, forgetting the order of Clement VIII., which obliged him to pay a sum annually of two thousand ducats to his son, and knowing that the Pope (although pretending severity) was of a different nature than Sixtus V., at first began to delay it, then to diminish it, and, finally, hardly gave him any-

thing ; therefore the family lived in great poverty, wanting even the common means of support.

Although Luisa suffered much, not so much for herself, as may be easily imagined, as for her family, still she managed as well as she could ; she was always cheerful to her husband, encouraged him to be of good spirits, for things would soon change for the better. After clouds comes sunshine, she would say to him, and every day that passes is the worst ; nor can things always last in the same way ; and other words of similar comfort, which the lips proffer, but which the heart does not believe ; for fortune too often seizes man by his hair, and drags him to his grave, and never leaves him until she has buried him, and trampled on the earth that covers him. The troubles of this courageous woman stood between God and herself ; and she truly felt her heart breaking, when she saw her noble husband not only poor in dress, but ragged, her children almost naked, and often hungry. By these constant strokes, however, her soul had somewhat changed ; a feeling of doubt would creep into her mind ; not without effort she would try to stifle a voice of reproof, which would come, from time to time, to upbraid her for her too much patience. Any one observing her carefully, might easily have seen from the expression of her face, and by the voice with which she uttered the last few words, that she was beginning to repent of the suffered sacrifice.

But to Giacomo, overcome by sorrow, this was not manifest.

" My dear Luisa," he replied, in a mysterious voice, " many other—many other crimes has this man committed. Listen—come nearer, that the children may not hear."

And as she, with a repulsive movement, did not approach, Giacomo drew nearer to her.

" You must know, that my mother was as virtuous as she was beautiful. But, although she kept her heart always true to conjugal affection, still she could not prevent others from falling

in love with her. The cavalier Gasparo Lansi was desperately in love with her ; and, acting less discreetly than is consistent with a gentleman of honor, spread abroad his passion by publishing an unfortunate sonnet. This sonnet may be forgiven as prompted by love, but it was not, however, by my mother. The day after Signor Gasparo had sent those lines, printed on pink paper, he came as usual to pay her a visit, while Count Cenci was absent. My mother, as soon as she saw him, rose, and bowing politely, with a voice somewhat different from its usual tone, said : ‘ Signor Gasparo, after the publicity given to your verses, I hoped your lordship would comprehend that an honorable lady could no longer receive your visits ; and as your good judgment seems to have erred, it is my duty to teach it to you with my own mouth.’ Then, somewhat moved by the paleness of the gentleman, she added, in a milder tone : ‘ But why, Signor Gasparo, does your lordship offer me a love which, as the wife of another, could not be returned without guilt ? whereas, if you would bestow it on some lady of your own rank, it would be precious, and would give her happiness. Turn your eyes around, and you will see that Rome is filled with girls of rare beauty and merit ; address your affection to one of them, and be sure it will be willingly accepted, as it deserves.”

Signor Lansi, thus forbidden to enter the house again, went away humiliated ; his voice denied its usual office, but his tears fell copiously. Yet, as love is fed on tears, sighs, and hope, he did not stop his usual habit of showing himself under the palace windows, pleased at least to gaze upon the dwelling of the woman he loved. One day, a little before daybreak, I heard several voices under the window of my room crying, ‘ mercy ! help ! murder ! ’ I immediately descended to the street, my sword in one hand and a light in the other, and saw, near the archway to the house, the body of Signor Gasparo pierced by a dagger, which passed from the right shoulder under the left



breast. But this is not all. My mother, already worn out by grief, became more sad for the misfortune which had befallen Signor Gasparo, fearing, as indeed it was evident, that on her account he had met with this awful death. Even before this bloody deed she rarely left the house ; but now she was never seen out, living very retired, shut up with her own afflictions. Thus oppressed by new and old sorrows, she failed so rapidly, that it was clear to those who saw her, that she had but a little while longer to remain in this world ; nay, news of her approaching death was spread with great care by Count Cenci, who had newly fallen, not so much in love, as into a furious passion for Lucrezia Petroni, our stepmother. One day, when the time seemed opportune, Count Cenci watching the chance while my mother, sitting by his side at dinner, had turned her head to speak to a servant, he, ready as the tongue of a viper, threw a small quantity of powder into her glass. My mother drank, and it tasting bitter, reproved the servant. The Count very officiously asked for the bottle, tasted the wine with care, and assured her it was the most exquisite *Alicante* he had ever tasted. I was on the point of opening my mouth to say it was the powder, when the Count, with a threatening look, cut short the words already upon my tongue, and said, with a soft voice : ‘Lady Virginia do not mind it, when one is not well, the first thing which seems distasteful is wine.’ And without saying another word he rose from the table. Three days after, at the same hour, my mother died. May God give her grace ; and without embalming her, on account of the sudden corruption, well closed within a triple coffin, she was hastily transported to a distant tomb.”

Luisa had listened to this tale with a scornful face, as if incredulous. When he had finished speaking, she replied bitterly :

“I do not mean to say that the Count is a saint, God for-



bid ! But such continual vituperation of your father has done you no good."

"And how do I vituperate him !"

"Was it not for such accusations as this, that His Holiness, believing you a heartless son, and desirous of your father's death, dismissed you from his presence disconsolate !"

"The good luck of this devil is equal to his perversity."

"Shame ! remember, you are talking of your father, and your children may hear you."

"And if they should hear, where is the wrong ? It is better that they should know how different is their grandfather from their father."

"You ? ah ! if it was really true what you tell of the Count, you would have in common with him the hatred of your children."

"The hate of my children ? Luisa, are you crazy to-night ?" and Giacomo looked up bewildered.

"Yes, yes," throwing aside all restraint, Luisa burst forth with great passion, "the hate of your blood : look at your hungry children, and you do not know how to feed them ; see them naked, and you do not try to clothe them ; I do not speak of myself. The house once dear to you, you now hate ; you come here seldom, you are sad, you go out immediately, and have not the least thought for us, who have been waiting for you whole nights in vain."

"Luisa, the soul which could, perhaps, bear your tears, is not able to sustain the spectacle of the silent grief of my family. I cannot bear the sight of so much misery. My dear wife, would you accuse me for my too much affection ?"

"Say, Giacomo, does your absence benefit your children more ? When they do not see you, do they weep the less ? Does your absence feed them, clothe them, console them ? Why do you

leave me, a poor desolate woman, without help? Were we not joined together in order to help each other? Why do you make me bear the cross alone?"

"Luisa, you are right; but cannot my tenderness, or my weakness, if you will, find pardon in you?"

"Cruel and deceitful man! Your tenderness! your weakness! and where do you spend your father's annuity?"

"What madness is this? Have I not told you a thousand times, that he has stopped it, that now and then he throws me three or four ducats, as in charity to an unfortunate beggar?"

"Ah, yes! he has stopped your annuity? throws you three or four ducats in charity! And your mistresses, tell me, how do you support them? And the children of other women, how do you feed them?"

"Luisa, you are mad."

"Oh, for my own part, you see, I care nothing, because I can return to my parents' house; and although fortune has been against them, yet they will receive me with love, and then I shall not be sorry to gain my livelihood by working. I will not reproach you for my faded beauty, my youth worn out with you. I shall certainly leave your house very different from what I entered it, but what does it matter? We women are flowers plucked for a passing fancy, then thrown away. I shall wish you no evil, God forbid! for I should wish it to the father of my children."

"My dear Luisa!—what new frenzy is this? speak calmly to me—listen."

In vain; it would have been as possible to dam the overflowing Tiber with your hands, as to repress the torrent of passion.

"Go to the arms of another woman—go—you will never find another being that will love you as much as I have loved you. But these are woman's words, and you will not listen to them—

but hear, I implore you, the others, which are those of a mother : Have pity on these unfortunate children—look them in the face—look in my face—and your heart will tell you they are your children—blood of your blood—at least, love them as much as the children you may have had from another woman : do not condemn them to starve. My little baby Angiolino, while I was able I nursed him myself—now, you see, I begin to fail—Oh, blessed Virgin !”

Giacomo stared around so wildly, and with such profound wonder, that he confirmed, rather than dissipated, his wife’s suspicions. At last, in despair he exclaimed :

“ Alas ! who poisons the heart of my wife ? who turns my wife’s affection from me ? what God has united, the wickedness of Count Cenci rends asunder. Francesco Cenci, I feel you here within ! Your subtle breath penetrates through me, incurable as a pestilence—Luisa, tell me, who was the man that slandered me to your heart ?”

“ Slanders ! How many sinners are there who strike their breasts saying, *peccavi* ? Is the necklace you bought your mistress a slander ? Slander also the dress of silver brocade to your illegitimate son ? and the house you rebuilt for her accommodating husband a slander too ?”

“ If you did not oppress my heart, you would truly make me laugh. Come, come Luisa ; these are lies.”

“ Lies ! you call them ? here then, read.” And taking a letter from her bosom, she threw it upon the table. Giacomo opened and read it. It was an anonymous letter, and written in a coarse hand and a plebeian style, in which warning was given to Luisa of her husband’s infidelity with the carpenter’s wife at Ripetta, and the great sums of money he lavished upon this woman ; it also informed her that Lord Cenci had rebuilt her house, and provided her husband with money for his business ; and also the precious jewels and rich dresses given to this woman ; and

beside this, the greatest wound of all to the heart of the poor mother was, that from this illicit union, a son had been born, whom Giacomo loved more than anything in the world. The gift of the little dress of silver brocade was lengthily described with cunning complaisance.

Giacomo, with a languid and slow motion, returned the paper to his wife, and sadly shaking his head said :

"How is it possible, my dear Luisa, that you, with the good judgment which you possess, could put faith in such infamous and stupid writing?"

"Because it is true," she replied, petulantly, with a convulsive sob.

"Luisa can you believe more in a calumniator who has not even the courage to sign his name—who certainly may have a thousand unjust ends to accomplish in acting thus treacherously ; so as to alienate your heart from me, disturb my domestic peace, tear away from me the only blessing that is left me—your love—than in me, who love you as the pupil of my eye, who honor you as the mother of my children ; and this I affirm and swear to you upon my soul."

"I believe more in the letter than in you, for the letter tells the truth, and you tell a lie."

"Luisa, I give you at a more proper time the instruction, which you a short time ago gave me : remember that not only your children may hear you, but that they do hear, and that I am their father."

"I tell this to you purposely in their presence that they may learn to know you in time."

"Silence ! Luisa, silence ! All you are dreaming of is false ; I swear it to you on my word as a gentleman of honor, and that is enough."

"Truly, you are a gentleman without reproach ; you have only to be without fear to resemble the Chevalier Bayard ! And

when you made me and my family believe that you had your father's consent to our marriage, did you not also swear to that upon your honor as a gentleman?"

Giacomo blushed to the very roots of his hair, then turned pale, and said with words full of bitterness:

"She, for whose love I committed a fault, certainly should not now so severely reproach me with it; at that time my passion for you took away my reason."

"And now, what does your passion take away?" Luisa insisted, unable to restrain her excitement.

Giacomo, exasperated, with a harsh voice commanded:

"Be silent!"

"Suppose I will not be silent?"

"I would find a way to make you—I"—

"You would find a way—perhaps you have already found it. When we place our heads upon the same pillow, who knows how many times you have thought to make mine leave it!"

"Luisa!"

"Now the snake has let his venom escape. Cruel man! is not the victim enough? you also wish her to be silent; not to even utter a sigh that may disturb the pleasure you feel at her death. Have at least the kindness of the ancient sacrifices—crown your victim with flowers, and cover her with purple?"

"Oh, be silent, for God's sake!"

"No, I will not be silent! No, I must speak—I must accuse you of your iniquity before men and God—traitor—liar—hypocrite!"

Such scorn made passion boil in the breast of Giacomo, already exasperated by misfortune, and as water by too much heat boils impetuously from the vessel, so he raved madly and fearfully. He thrust his hand convulsively beneath his dress; but fortunately could not find his dagger. Turning his eyes about the room in a frenzy, he happened to see one of those long ra-



piers, sharp on four sides, called *verduchi*, he seized it, and blinded by his rage, rushed upon his wife.

Luisa, taking her children about her in haste, placed the larger ones in front of her, and carried the little one to her bosom, then falling on her knees before her husband, who was rushing upon her, without moving her eyes, said boldly :

“ Nurse him with my blood, since I have nothing to give him !”

Giacomo stopped ; he tottered like one who had received a blow upon the head, threw the rapier away, and extended his arms towards his wife, who, turning her face from him, exclaimed :

“ No—never !”

Giacomo despondingly turned to his children, and with a feeling of ineffable tenderness, said :

“ Come, my dear children, persuade your mother that she is deceived ; tell her I have always loved her, and do love her. You will at least come to my arms. Come to my bosom, and console me, for my heart is full of infinite bitterness.”

“ No, you have made mother cry !”

“ You wanted to strike mother—go away !”

“ We don’t love you any more, you are wicked !”

“ Go away—go away !” cried all the children at once.

“ Go away ! it is well. My children repulse me from their bosom—banish me from my house. I will go. But you, at least,” added Giacomo, turning to the little baby whom Luisa had replaced in its cradle, “ innocent creature, whom men have not yet been able to poison—you must purely feel the cry of nature, receive my embrace, and keep it as the only inheritance that your unhappy father can leave you.”

The child, frightened by his agitated aspect and excited actions, raised both his little hands to shield his face, and cried with fear. Giacomo stopped—looked at him—folded his arms



upon his breast, and with agitated voice, uttered the following words :

“Behold ; my father persecutes me to death—my wife denies me. Nature herself inverts her laws against me, and the little child abhors me as a thing which instinct teaches him is baneful. Man never should be brought to this pass, and I have suffered it to reach its last extremity ! Like the trunk of a tree, I lie in the path of my children, a hateful and insidious encumbrance. Why, my sad soul, do you wait longer ? Your departure is now useful to yourself and children. I once educated them under my branches, now my shadow takes the sun away from them—the dew that falls from me is poisonous—I will go ; shall I bless them, or not ? I would, but dare not. No—lest my words, before descending upon their heads, be converted into a curse. A bitter life, a miserable death, a hated memory. Oh, God ! dost thou see these things ? canst thou see them, and consent to them ? Thou hast broken the bent reed, and I am conquered—alas ! alas !”

Thus murmuring, with death in his thoughts, his hands thrust into his hair, groaning bitterly, he left the house. Whoever had seen him, though an enemy, would have said : “Lord have mercy on this unfortunate man !”

His wife, although the storm continued to disturb her mind, felt a milder feeling arising in her heart, a forerunner of passionate tears, on account of the spontaneous burst of affection shown her by her children ; and that she loved them all the more for it, need not be said.

In parents there exists, I will not say without their knowing it, but without confessing it even to themselves, a certain emulation in the love of their children, which is usually manifest thus. Mothers make themselves to be loved by their daughters in preference to the father, and even the boys, too, when they are weak and ill ; but when health is vigorous within them, fond of

open fields or the noise of cities, they detach themselves by degrees from the mother, and draw nearer to their father. Giacomo's children were of an age in which they stood in need of maternal caresses and help ; therefore it was natural that they should take the side of their mother.

Luisa did not notice the departure of her husband, or, if she did, she cared but little ; satisfied, so to say, with filial love. The burning kisses and the warm caresses, which she received and returned, made her forget that the stronger tie of family was broken. Alas ! how dearly will she pay for the evil moment in which she rashly committed her soul to the fury of an ungovernable passion.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FATHER-IN-LAW.

..... il maligno  
Che in lei strada sì larga aprir si vede,  
Tacito in sen le serpe, ed al governo  
Del suoi pensieri lusingando siede ;  
E qui più sempre l' ira, e l' odio interno  
Inacerbiace . . . . .

TASSO, *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

"I WILL ascertain it by myself personally," exclaimed Luisa with a resolute manner. She arranged as well as she was able her humble dress ; took from her drawer a mantle of black silk for a covering ; and, recommending her children to the only maid which she had in the house, cautioning her repeatedly not to lose sight of them, started directly for the palace of her father-in-law.

Coming into the ante-chamber, she noticed that the servants stared boldly at her, esteeming her a person of little consequence ; and would perhaps have insulted her with some coarse epithet, if she had not cut short their looks and vulgar words, by going directly towards them, and with ladylike bearing saying :

"Announce to Count Don Francesco Cenci that his daughter-in-law has come to pay him a visit, and is waiting in the ante-room."

It really seemed to the valets as if they had fallen from the frying-pan into the fire. They knew not whether to announce

her or not ; both ways were dangerous. The character of their master was so strange, that if they could not guess it, the least that could happen to them would be to lose their daily bread.

*Bread !* a magnetic needle which leads more beastlily than beasts themselves, the flock of Adam's children.

*Bread !* a daily food, which men either more unhappy or lower than brutes, too often know not how to procure without crime or without shame.

*Bread !* a stone that necessity ties to the neck of every noble sentiment, to sink it in an abyss of evil. It surely was great wisdom to insert in the Lord's Prayer a request to God to give us our daily bread ; but as we sometimes find it is not always heard, it might be of great use to add these other words : *And if thou canst not, or dost not wish to give us bread, give us at least the fortitude to starve without shame.*

Nevertheless man does not wish to starve, and spreads shame upon his bread like butter ; nor does it seem to disturb his appetite, or spoil his digestion.

The older servants, who by this time had become three-fourths flesh of wolves, gathered together to consult what was to be done ; but their conference was short, for one of them, who had been butler to the convent of the Jesuits in Rome, winked towards a certain young valet who had been only a short time in the service of the Count, and was very vain, and said : " Praise the fool and make him run." So they said to him :

" Ciriaco—come now—it is your turn : we will give you a good chance to become acquainted with our master ; besides, you are young, and courteous—we are old, and do not know what manners to use towards ladies of the present day ; so that the presentation of this lady belongs by right to you."

The old servants spread the net through malice, the young one fell into it through vanity ; perhaps with the secret thought of supplanting them one day in their master's favor. All selfish,

as it usually happens in a crowd of servants, all guided by the same miserable instinct of *bread*.

"Your Excellency," said Ciriaco, bending his body like the first quarter of the moon, when he reached the presence of the Count ; "there is a certain lady without, who announces herself daughter-in-law of your Excellency, and desires an audience."

"Who did you say ?" cried the Count, starting from his chair. He always addressed servants with a very severe aspect : to-day, however, he seemed frightful ; as he had his face bound up in strips of linen, and he felt severely the pain of the burn.

"The daughter-in-law of your Excellency."

The Count stared at the servant with so fierce a look, that he felt a chill as of a coming fever. However, supported by the virtue of *bread*, he bent lower to the ground, and added :

"Although it has not escaped my notice that your relatives, for a thousand reasons, each more plausible than another, are not liked by your Excellency"—

"Have you noticed this ?"

"This and other things ; for it is my nature not to allow anything to pass unobserved in the wishes of my masters, in order to forestall all their desires. Nevertheless, I thought it improper to send her back, considering the respect due to the illustrious house whose illustrious name the lady affirms to bear."

Count Cenci smiled disdainfully, seeing how the blockhead, by his flattery, was endeavoring to ingratiate himself into his favor. So, after he had finished speaking, staring at him, he said :

"And what has given you reason to suspect that my relations, and especially her ladyship Donna Luisa, my daughter-in-law, may be unwelcome to me ? You spy the actions of your masters, and that is very bad ; you interpret wrongly their motives, and that is worse. Go to my steward, make him pay you the whole year's wages, and take off my livery ; to-night you must not sleep in my palace."

The servant looked like one, who seeking shelter from the rain beneath a tree, feels falling on his head a branch struck by the lightning ; he would have knelt to sue, by words and signs, for mercy ; but that the Count, angry at his delaying after he had given his order, with a voice impossible to resist, added :

“ Go !”

“ Ah ! most noble and illustrious Lady Luisa,” said the servant with eager words, “ you see—in order that your Ladyship might enter, I must go. I leave it to you if it is right. I am turned into the street, I will not say on your account, God forbid ! but certainly to render you this service I must bear this misfortune : try to remedy it : I recommend myself to you, on my conscience.”

The soul of the valet, half begging and half reproaching, constrained by the agony for *bread*, attached itself now to Lady Luisa (despised a little while before) as the last anchor of hope.

Luisa, to tell the truth, felt her heart sink for this sad chance, but more for the poor fellow ; and was in doubt whether she should enter, or return home, as this seemed to her explanation enough, and perhaps a little too much ; however, the worst counsel prevailed, and she entered. The old servants crowded around their unfortunate companion, and slyly deriding him, tried to heal his wound with oil of vitriol.

Luisa, with a bearing neither humble nor proud, approached the desk where her father-in-law awaited her, standing ; and so she, in order to honor him as a father, was about to kneel before him ; he would not allow it, but raised her quickly, with mild voice saying :

No, my daughter, my ears are not in my feet. Do not take it as a reproof, but human creatures should never kneel to any one, but their God.”

“ Father, since you so kindly grant me the right of using this name, permit me before all to ask your pardon for not having



presented myself to you before ; but I had been assured that you would have turned me out of your house—this humiliation, you know, would have been insupportable to a Roman lady.”

“ Certainly, to become the wife of my first-born, upon whom I had placed all my tenderness as all my pride—without even asking my consent—rather, without my paternal blessing ; but what do I say by blessing and consent ? without even saying to me a single word about it—seemed such a forgetfulness of every authority—such a contempt of all respect, that a father’s heart could not help groaning deeply. As regards turning you away from my presence, pardon me—but my daughter-in-law, as she feels she is a Roman lady, ought to know, that a Roman Barou can never fail in courtesy toward a lady, even should she be by chance disagreeable to him.”

And as Luisa, stung by the slight allusion to her humble parentage, was about to answer with some warmth, the cunning old man, who had noticed the blush which passed over her cheeks, hastened to add with milder tone :

“ And much the more, as you being born of respectable parents, and called a very accomplished person, I could have found no reasonable cause of opposing your marriage. Nor would the moderate means of your family have been an obstacle, as my house has no need of it, for fortune does with riches as the sea with its waves, which overflow and flow back from the shores without rest ; and virtue without money always pleased me more than riches with pride, malice or stupidity.”

“ Sir Count, I am sorry that in order to exculpate myself I must accuse others ; but it is right that you should know how Giacomo, conquered by his passion, deceived me, swearing on his honor that you knew and consented to our union : and only for some private reasons desired it should for a while be kept a secret.”

“ And see,” exclaimed the Count, stamping forcibly his foot

upon the floor, "how the contempt of the first duty of a gentleman, loyalty, always leads to a miserable end. You then were deceived ; I betrayed. Perhaps I might reproach you for too much credulity ; I might also call you and your parents indiscreet ; but, however this may be, it is not the fault of your children."

"It was on their account principally, who are of your blood, and will continue your descent."

"And how many have you ?"

"Four, all very handsome—angels of innocence and beauty," replied Luisa warmly, while her eyes sparkled with tears, daughters of maternal pride.

"How fruitful is the race of vipers !" thought Count Cenci to himself ; but with smiling lips he said :

"May God preserve them to you."

"Father, your words encourage me. Hear me then, for I have come on purpose to speak of your grandchildren. You see in me a sorrowful mother, truly a Mother of Tears. I am not here to speak of myself. Do not look at my humble dress, for which a little while ago I became the jest of your own servants—but my children, your grandchildren, have no clothes to wear—no bread to satisfy their hunger."

And the tears of pride, which she shed a little while before so joyfully, were now turned into broken sobs, and tears of grief.

"How can this be ? I will not deny that I have always been rather parsimonious towards Giacomo than otherwise ; as experience had taught me, that his no very praiseworthy habits had increased in proportion with the means which he possessed to indulge them. The cask of the Danaides was a fable, but my son's extravagance is an irremediable vice. I always have refrained from contributing to render him worse than he is. A kind of remorse, and the fear of being called one day to render to God an account, has restrained me from showing myself too

liberal. If our ancestors had not instituted an entail of the property, and I did not intend to imitate them in this worthy practice, believe me, my dear lady and respected daughter-in-law, that I should be thoughtful, and really concerned about the fate of your children, and my grandchildren. Yet, it has seemed to me that two thousand ducats a year might provide the necessities and even comforts of life to your family."

"But Giacomo says that you withhold it from him, and that occasionally you throw him a few ducats, more as an insult than as aid to his family."

"He says this? Perhaps he swears it, too, upon the same word of honor with which he assured you that I was cognizant and consented to your marriage? I will not swear, for I have been taught that the language of a Christian should be, yes, yes, or no, no. But look, and see for yourself, upon the family accounts," (and taking a book of records, he opened it, pointing out to her divers entries, which his daughter-in-law abstained from reading), "if the promised annuity has been paid to him, or not. Since this unfortunate man reduces his father to the humiliation of justifying himself, the stones themselves would rise to testify against him. Slander—and always an unjust slander; yet, that is not the worst fault for which I must reproach Giacomo! But my griefs shall be buried with me. Alas! Francesco Cenci, what a miserable father you are, and what an unhappy old man. Alas! alas!" and he covered his face with both hands.

Luisa felt moved at his venerable aspect and deep affliction; and the hypocrite still continued with a lamenting voice:

"Would that I could find at least a heart where to pour the great bitterness of my soul!"

"My father—Lord Count—I also am an unhappy mother and wife—pour out your griefs to me—we will weep in secret—together."

“Excellent woman! My good daughter! No, no—the duty of the wife consists in being attached bone to bone to the husband which she has chosen as her companion for life; therefore I should abstain from words, and perhaps I have already said too many, which may make you love him less. Oh, Giacomo! what nights of agony you have shed upon the last years of your poor father! The faces of my grandchildren—proud boast of grandfathers—are unknown to me. We might all live under the same roof, united with the blessing of God! This palace is too large for me; I walk through it desolate and coldly; I, that ought to see myself reflected in the faces of my grandchildren—I, that ought to be warmed with their caresses; between our hearts, which desire to come near to each other, and our bodies, an iron wall arises; and you, miserable Giacomo, you have built it!”

Luisa, observing the ashy hue of hatred which seemed to overspread the face of the Count, feared she might have aggravated the fate of her husband; hence she cautiously asked him, in a low tone:

“Do the faults of your son offend you so much, my dear father, that the hope of merited pardon may not enter your paternal heart?”

“I leave it to you to judge. I will remind you of a thing, which, being universally known, frees me from renewing to you the bitter grief of relating it. Who was it that induced Olimpia to write the wicked address to the Pope, by which my erring child was torn from my arms with so much grief to my heart, and injury to my reputation?—Giacomo. Who caused that this infamous libel should reach the hands of his Holiness?—Giacomo? Who was it that knelt at the feet of Christ’s Vicar, imploring him with sighs and tears for my death? Who? An enemy, perhaps? The heir of some one whom I had murdered? No—Giacomo—the man who owes his life to me!”

“ Oh, my dear father ! Come, quiet yourself ; perhaps they have reported to you more than Giacomo has ever said or did. Your good judgment knows the bad habits of servants to exaggerate the faults of the man fallen into the disgrace of their master, in order to ingratiate themselves into his favor by adding fuel to the fire. And if the faults of your son were as heavy as you say, you must remember he is of your blood ; you must remember our Saviour pardoned those who crucified him, because they knew not what they were doing.”

“ But Giacomo knows too well what he is doing. Every day he increases in vice ; every moment he labors to take away my reputation, and the little remnant of my unhappy life. My son wildly wonders at the slow approach of my death, whose wings he, with so much desire, hastens. Listen to me, my daughter, and if my passion leaps the boundaries and overflows, you must pardon it. However, let me impress upon you, that these horrors should be only with God, you, and I ; above all, let your children never know them, that they may not learn to hate their father. Only a few days ago, he came here to pervert Beatrice and Bernardino, treacherously persuading them that I had caused the death of Virgilio ; as if this unfortunate child, for his and my great misfortune, had not that incurable disease, consumption. And this is not all : but down in the church of St. Thomas, erected by the piety of our ancestors, and remodelled by me, while celebrating the solemn obsequies to the soul of my dead child, they were converting the catafalque into a seat of abomination, with no respect for the sanctity of the place, for the sacred altar, for the solemnity of the ceremony ; in the presence of God, he was plotting with my other misguided children and my wife—my death. You shudder, good Luisa ? suspend your horror, for you will have many other things yet to shudder for. Then, when I, a miserable father, went to weep over the body of the angelic creature, called before his time to a better world,



I know not what new frenzy, or unheard of rage, took possession of them—but they threw upon me the little dead boy—they struck me—they wounded me. See for yourself, my daughter ; examine—I bear the proof upon my face—the marks of their unholy attempt.”

Here he paused, as if overcome by the atrocious recollection ; then, with tears, began again to speak :

“Henceforth, when my children approach me—Giacomo above all—do you know what I must do ? See if my coat of mail is well fastened—look to see if I have forgotten my dagger. Place between them and me a faithful dog, who would defend my life from their fury. Yes, a dog ; since my own blood is hostile to me. Suspicious of the human race, I must seek my defence among brutes. Indeed, I did have a dog—a faithful one—and they killed him by thrusting a sword in his heart—bloody forewarning of what they reserve for their father. For some time a thought has come to me—which, born upon my sad pillow, has already gained a mastery over me as a fixed thing—and it is, whether I should let them commit a parricide, or rather, with my own hands, end this miserable existence, and spare them the infamy and punishment of the crime—to myself, the insupportable burden of living. Ah ! my God, how hard it is to think of losing their souls and mine !”

Here, bending his head, he glanced at a certain letter from Spain, which informed him of the approaching death of Philip II., more admired by him than any other king, and thought to himself : “Happy he that before dying was able to strangle his son, and be blessed for it by the Holy Mother Church !”

Meanwhile, a very soft knock was heard at the door. The Count, raising his head, with a loud voice said :

“Come in.”

Marzio appeared, who, with some hesitation, seeing the lady, said :



“Your Excellency—the notary”——

“Let him wait. Tell him to pass into the green-room, where he may wait at his ease.”

“Your Excellency, he bade me say, that very urgent business called him elsewhere.”

“*Per Dio!* who is this fellow, that he dares to have a will different from mine, and in my own house, too? I feel almost tempted to treat him like Count Ugolino, and throw the keys into the Tiber. Go, and do not let him depart without my permission.”

The ill suppressed rage with which the Count uttered these words, might have shown to any one who would have paid the least attention to them, the hypocrisy which he had used in his previous conversation; but Luisa's thoughts were turned elsewhere, and she stood a long time with her eyes fixed on the ground, like a person wholly discouraged, and unable to form a thought, or utter a word.

The Count looked at her suspiciously, but reassured, continued:

“However, I will not depart from my intention that the children should not bear the penalty of paternal errors. This law, too severe a one, was mitigated by the doctrine of Christ, and I am a Christian. You have happened to come at the very time when I was about to put into execution this conviction of mine. I have disposed to institute your children as heirs of all my personal property; as for the entail I am certain of its safety, for it cannot be either mortgaged or alienated; Giacomo can squander only the income of the entail, but he must, in spite of himself, render the principal untouched to the eldest son. I shall name you administratrix of my personal property; and I hope, after you have provided honorably for the family, there may be enough left to increase the patrimony. I desired to consult you on this subject; but I could not determine to send for you,

doubtful if you would have accepted the invitation. Now that you have come freely yourself, I must confess that God inspired you. The blind even may see in this the hand of Providence."

Although Luisa, as a mother, could not but feel greatly pleased by the good dispositions of the grandfather in favor of her children, still, as an honorable woman, she could not help saying :

"And Lady Beatrice and Don Bernardino?"

"Beatrice has her dowry already secured, sufficient for any great lady. Bernardino is to be educated for the church, and the house of Cenci possesses the patronage of a large number of the highest prebendaries in Rome."

"And the other children?"

"What children?"

"Don Christopher and Don Felix."

"They? Oh! God be thanked, they are already provided for, and have no need of anything," replied the Count, and his eyes contracted, and sent forth a most malicious smile.

"Sir Count, I am not moved by curiosity, but a desire of not appearing in my own eyes too desirous of others' property, I insist, then, upon knowing how my brothers-in-law have been provided for."

"They are each married to a powerful lady, who will pay their expenses, and can also pay the expenses of others—of this, if you please, we will speak hereafter, and at our leisure."

"Sir Count, before leaving you"—and Lady Luisa hesitated a moment; but motherly love conquering womanly pride, she took courage and continued: "I wish to tell you the reason which led me to seek you."

"Tell it."

"If my prayers should be answered by Heaven, you would live forever; but my children are in want of everything."

"Ah! fool that I am!" the Count began, touching his head

lightly, as if talking to himself. "Poor woman ! she is right. She cannot count upon the money of this miserable man, as he spends it out of the house on another woman whom he loves ; upon other children, who form his delight more than his lawful ones."

"How ! how !" exclaimed Luisa, seizing the arm of her father-in-law. "Then you know it also, Sir Count ?"

"Lady Luisa," replied the Count, with severe countenance, "I would have you know, that the heart of a father is no less jealous of his son's reputation, than is the wife of her husband's affection ; but in the wreck of every honest feeling in Giacomo, we all have lost—you, a husband—I, a son."

Luisa uttered a deep sigh.

"Now, hear me, Lady Luisa, I will willingly furnish you with the means necessary for your family ; but on one condition, which you will swear solemnly to observe. I do not require you to promise blindly ; no, I will state the condition, and my reason for it, so that finding, as I do not doubt you will, the former discreet, and the latter tending to the benefit of your children, you may promise it freely with your conscience."

"Sir Count, I am ready to hear."

"You, like all good women, wholly absorbed in one love alone, very quickly recover from the anger which excites you against the object of your lawful affections ; you are like sails which fall down at every slight lulling of the wind. Oh ! I know what a virtue lies in two little tears and a kiss, in calming the fiercest matrimonial quarrels. I see Giacomo already pardoned, and loved a thousand times more by his most affectionate wife. Then you will confide to him the money, and the means by which you obtained it from me ; and he (let him alone for that !) will soon find a way to relieve you of it ; and I, instead of supporting my grandchildren, shall see with grief, that it is gone to feed his vicious habits. I foresee also, that in this very

act he will take occasion for slandering me, and I do not want a benefit to cause me a new bitterness. Are those not enough which I already suffer ? Does it seem indiscreet, if I do not try to increase the weight of them ? Now, on no account do I wish you to tell him you have money ; and much less to let him know from whom it came. Does this condition seem to you one to be refused ?”

“Certainly not ; you advise me for the best, and even without a condition I should have done just as you would have indicated to me.”

“So much the better. See this holy relic.”

And the Count took from his bosom a small gold cross, and giving it to his daughter-in-law, added :

“Swear upon this cross, blessed at the sepulchre of the Lord, by the salvation of your soul, by the life of your children, that you will keep the promise.”

“There is no need of such solemn rites,” replied Luisa smiling : “but I swear it.”

“That is well ; now take as much as you like.” And so saying, he opened a drawer full of gold coins of different value ; and as Luisa, somewhat abashed, blushed, the Count said insistingly : “Take some, take some. It would seem very strange that between father and daughter, there should be any ceremony. Come, I will take some for you ; and filling a purse, he gave it to her. Luisa thanked him with a motion of her head, blushing.

“Before you go, my dear daughter, listen to another word—because you understand very well, how in spite of the atrocious injuries with which Giacomo has offended me—and alas ! will always continue to offend me, he is still my son. Leave no means untried to bring back the prodigal son to my heart—shut your eyes to his infidelity—suffer the insults—forget that he has other children beside yours ; that while he causes his lawful children to want the necessaries of life, he lavishes upon

his natural, or rather his adulterous children, his money, so that they may be clothed in dresses of gold and silver. Pardon him, convert him, and bring him back to me; my arms are always open to him, my heart ever ready to forget everything in one sincere embrace. Try to give me back a son, and you will at once have recovered the father to your children, the husband to yourself, Oh, if this could happen before I close my eyes forever! My life has surely been one of affliction, and it already draws towards its end; but, as sometimes it happens, a stormy day grows bright towards evening, and a ray of sunlight, pale, but blessed—late but desired, comes to bid a friendly farewell to him who is about to depart.”

“Sir Count, you have filled me with so much wonder, tenderness and gratitude, that I cannot express it to you in words. Let this kiss which I impress with filial affection on your paternal hand, speak for me. But although I feel that I can never repay you for the many benefits which you have heaped upon me, still I beg of you to be kind enough to add another, which is, that you will deign to take back the servant whom you dismissed on my account.”

“Excellent woman! not I, Luisa, but you, forgive the fault; since I had dismissed him for the want of respect he showed in speaking of you.”

Then he rung his bell, and a valet appeared.

“Ciriaco.”

Ciriaco came; his head bent towards the ground.

“Give thanks to Lady Luisa dei Cenci, my illustrious daughter-in-law, who permits you to remain, excusing your fault. Henceforth correct yourself, and be more respectful towards your superiors.”

“My good lady,” said Ciriaco, throwing himself at her feet, “may God reward you for me and my poor family, who without your charity would be forced to beg, and could have no bread.”



Luisa smiled upon him. The Count accompanied her with great courtesy to the door, in spite of her prayer for him to be seated ; and then, returning hastily, placed his hand on the shoulder of Ciriaco, and with a fierce look fixed upon him, said :

“ Not only must you leave my house this very instant, but Rome also, and even the Pontifical states, and quickly too. If to-morrow I know you to be here, I will myself see about your journey. Go without looking back—I have not the power of changing you into a pillar of salt ; I can only change you into a dead man. Put a seal on your mouth, fear of me in your soul ; if your feet fail you, walk on your hands and knees. You who have had the dangerous curiosity of prying into the habits of your master, must have noticed that he never fails in doing what he promises. Go, and remember that God is not scrutinized but worshipped ; and every master should be as a God to his servants and subjects.”

These threats and the look threw so much fear into the heart of the servant, that he left Rome without seeing his family. At every motion of a leaf he seemed to see by his side some *bravo* of Count Cenci ; nor was his flight relaxed until many miles from Rome.

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“ At your Excellency’s orders,” said the notary (with the servile familiarity of all barristers), on entering the room.

The Count, with the pride of a magnate, replied :

“ I sent for you, sir, to consign to you my autograph will : you write the deed of receipt while I send for proper witnesses: do it well and quickly.”

The witnesses came, and bowed ; the deed was drawn up in proper order ; the witnesses then departed as they came in, without uttering a word ; impassible, seeming rather shadows



than men. The notary, while collecting his papers, could hardly refrain from giving vent to his garrulity, a fault which he had in common with all his brothers of the bar.

"*Per Bacco*," he exclaimed, "I am aware your Excellency is not partial to observations, and therefore I hastened to serve you with all due forms : yet it seems to me that your Excellency is not of that age that such an act is necessary, *and men change their wills even unto death* ; so one fulfills much better the duty of making a will, the longer he delays it. Such dispositions partake of the nature of melons, which, remaining a long time uneaten after being gathered, become at last rotten.

"Is man master of the morrow ? Men at my age are like Jews at Easter, with the staff in their hands and sandals on their feet, ready to depart. I could have no rest, until I was fully assured of the fate of my children and grandchildren."

The notary who had a mouth like a fox and brain also, fixed two little shining eyes upon him ; and, pressing his lips, smiled as if he had tasted a sour apple, which seemed to say, such demonstrations of affection before him were not worth a straw, and an old bird like him was not to be caught with chaff.

"As regard to that, your Excellency," observed the cunning lawyer, "your paternal heart need have no uneasiness, since the law itself provides for all. Do you know, Count, how we lawyers, who understand such things, define a will ? An illegitimate act, by which the father of a family takes away the property from whom it belongs."

The Count cast a sharp look at him, but the notary had changed his expression, and looked as if he had made these remarks more from simplicity than malice. Count Cenci could do no better than to imitate him ; so, with feigned simplicity, he replied :

"Only think ! I may, after all, have done a useless act ? But *utile per inutile non vitiatur*, as you lawyers say, and, even

if it has not served me in any way, it has at least given me the pleasure of conversing with you, and you the pleasure of having gained some ducats."

And feeling him liberally, as he was wont, the Count got rid of this importunate observer of his affairs; who went off wriggling like a snake, and saying, with his hands full of money.

"Too generous! always princely! God keep you healthy and prosperous."

The count, remaining alone, murmured to himself:

"Now, the Cencis can no more enjoy my free estates. I have disinherited all my children, in case they should, any of them, survive me; however, I shall try all I can not to have this happen. The reason of the disinheritance is the principal one among the fourteen indicated by Justinian. My will shall be respected. *Per Dio!* if my grandchildren shall not be reduced to gnaw their fingers through hunger, I would come to life again and strangle the judges who should decide in their favor. Besides, I have constituted as heirs, holy places, religious corporations, and such like *dead hands*. Dead hands! They asked for bricks, and they brought sand; what tower of Babel is this? The language must be reformed. Dead hands! Were there ever seen in this world hands more alive to take, more firm to keep?—The entail remains! An immense treasure! Now, how shall I be able to alienate and scatter it? I must come to some agreement with Cardinal Aldobrandini: this fellow would even take hell to barter its ashes. What fierce avarice! The cunning sharpness of a Roman priest united with the shrewdness of a Florentine merchant! I really believe that he has tried to extract gold from the stones of the Coliseum. But to take away from the wolves, I must throw to the hyenas—wild beasts against wild beasts—cruel necessity! but so be it; provided, my children remain without clothing, let the devil himself wear my mantle. What a respectable figure the

devil would make with my scarlet mantle embroidered with gold ! Let no one dare to accuse me of not having left any property to my children and grandchildren, for it would be untrue. As Timon left to the Athenians the fig tree of his field, so that they might hang themselves thereon at their ease, I leave as inheritance to my children the Tiber, in which to drown themselves."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE BANQUET.

CENCI. "Welcome, my friends and kinsmen ; Welcome, ye  
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the Church,  
Whose presence honors our festivity.  
I have too long lived like an anchorite,  
And, in my absence from your merry meetings,  
An evil word is gone abroad of me ;  
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,  
When you have shared the entertainment here,  
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,  
And we have pledged a health or two together,  
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you ;  
Sinful, indeed, for Adam made all so,  
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

SHELLEY, *Beatrice Cenci*.

COUNT DON FRANCESCO CENCI had prepared a sumptuous banquet, in truth a royal feast. The tables were spread within a spacious hall, the ceiling of which was magnificently painted by the best masters of that age, in which art was not entirely corrupted. Around the hall ran a white gilded cornice, supported at equal intervals by columns, also white, ornamented with gold arabesque. The spaces between the pillars were covered by mirrors more than eight cubits high ; but as the Venetian workmen were not then able to manufacture mirrors of such size in a single piece, they were covered, in order to hide the points, with cupids, fruits, flowers, foliage, and various kind of birds beautifully executed ; eight doors were hung with curtains of white brocade satin, the edges embroidered with

golden flounces of raised work, and in the centre the coat of arms, white and red.

All was magnificent—draperies, mirrors, and paintings—except that the painting of the Bolognese school displayed richness, not being able any longer to show beauty in its simplicity.

Painting having with Raphael reached its highest degree of perfection, decayed according to the natural fate of all things here below. In some things, however, decay happens inevitably, as having attained a definite point of perfection ; in others, on the contrary, decay is accidental, being indefinite in point of perfection. Poetry must be numbered with the latter, painting with the former. The reason of this difference seems to me is obvious ; as the aim of painting is to reproduce objects in their own image, so much more praiseworthy it seems when it portrays them more exactly :

“ Morti gli morti, i vivi parean vivi ;  
Non vide me 'di me chi vide il vero.”

Poetry is nourished not only in the physical perception of the objects, but also by the arguments of thoughts, and the impetus of the passions. Irradiating the eyes, the heart, and the intellect with a halo perpetually variegated with multiform colors, it thus diffuses sounds from its immortal lyre, various and inexhaustible. Raphael stands as the master of painting, nor has any one yet been able to surpass him, and perhaps none ever will ; the path to so much perfection is only one. Many, however, shine as the greatest stars of song, for the wandering intellects in the boundless firmament of poetry can take any flight which their own genius may counsel or their wings support.

I will not weary my readers with descriptions of the enchantment which came from the perfume of flowers, the glittering of

white candles in silver candlesticks, a thousand times reflected in the mirrors, in the trays, the bowls, the urns, the vases, the statuettes, the grotesque works, and silver ware of all kinds, wonderful for their richness, and admirable for their workmanship. The time of this history is not so very distant, that he who desires to see such things may not view them in the public museums. In the houses of our nobles they are seen no more, or but rarely ; for they have sold them to foreigners. What would not our nobles sell, if they could find purchasers ? In comparison with this shameful trafficking, blessed be—I was about to say—yes, blessed be the plunder of the hated Austrian ! The soldier robber does not carry away with him your hope that one day the ill-gotten prize may be recovered, not your wish of striving for it with all your powers ; but the foreigner who buys with a bargain your paternal relics, buys at the same time a piece of your heart, and a part of your country ! Plunder disposes the heart to liberty and revenge ; voluntary sale to servitude. The Spartans punished less a violence done to a maid, than a seduction, and justly too ; for, by violence the body alone is contaminated ; by seduction, the body and soul together. To-day, in our laws, all is reversed ; a proof among a thousand others, that matter has conquered mind, and manifest signs may be seen everywhere of it.

But I will return to my subject ; for my tragedy requires a narration, not of furniture, but of souls and passions. Count Cenci received his guests with that politeness inherent in his noble house, and the courtesy which came from his own spirit. There were present several of the Colonna family, two of Santa Croce, Onofrio prince of Oriolo, and Don Paolo, of whom we spoke in the beginning of this history ; there was my Lord Treasurer, and then came the Cardinals Sforza, Barberini, friends or rather relatives of the Cencis, together with several others whom history does not mention ; and lastly, by express



order of the Count, Lady Lucrezia, Beatrice, and Bernardino. Beatrice was dressed in black. If she had not worn this dress as a kind of protest against the fearful joy of the paternal banquet, one might have suspected she had done it as a woman's artifice, to show the dazzling whiteness of her complexion. Her only ornament was a withered rose in her blond hair—symbol, alas ! of her approaching fate.

“ Welcome, noble kindred, and friends ; welcome, most eminent cardinals, pillars of the Holy Mother Church, and splendor *urbis et orbis*. Could heaven bestow on me a hundred tongues of bronze, a hundred chests of iron, as Homer invoked, I could not consider them enough to give you thanks for the high honor which you do my family, to favor them with your presence.”

“ Count Cenci, your illustrious house is so highly placed, that it needs no other ray for shining as the brightest star in the Roman heaven,” replied, according to the custom of the times, Signor Curzio Colonna.

“ You, in the fullness of your kindness, are too partial towards me, my honorable Don Curzio ; however, I thank you greatly for your love. I, my lords, had almost become a stranger to you ; I have feared that my appearance among you might cause you fear, as that of a man returned from the grotto of Trophonius ; but what could I do ? A great sadness troubled me—an evil disease ! And I, who so well know how it penetrates to the very bones, have kept it carefully concealed in my breast ; lest I should be like Pandora, when she incautiously opened the box, and poured, unwillingly, upon the world an infinite family of evils. Sadness is like the fine dust which an east wind raises ; it penetrates everywhere, it sticks to everything, and wearies body and soul. The melancholy man, with a better reason than the leprous, should be expelled from the tabernacle of Israel and from the festivities of the heirs of Anacreon. I speak for you, priests, for whom I profess the greatest respect and veneration ; as for you,

laymen, I should have proceeded with less ceremony—but no—I have thought that if I had sufficient cause to throw myself away, thank God, trees and rivers, to hang on or drown in, were not wanting ; but I should not have placed myself indiscreetly between the sun and you, to darken your lives. I, however, have not hung myself, for, having well considered of the affair, death is a bad quarter of an hour—and upon a thing which can be done but once, I have heard it is best to think twice ; but I also did not wish to sadden you with my presence. Now, that a ray of light shines obliquely into my mind to brighten it, I shake the ashes from my hair ; I gather once more a rose—perhaps the last—to adorn it. Indeed, during winter, one should not desire roses too often ; nor will the gentle flower blossom among snows—but here, in loved Italy, and my daughter Beatrice gives you a proof of it, roses grow in all seasons ; but if you cannot find them in your own garden, go to your neighbor's, and pluck or steal them. Yes, take them by force ; what law will condemn an old man who, before dying, steals a rose in remembrance of his dead youth, and as a comfort to his dying life ? It would be as well for his Holiness to excommunicate a dying man for having given his last look to the light which is fast disappearing. And you, Beatrice, what strange fancy has taken you to put a withered rose in your hair ? You fear, perhaps, a comparison between your cheeks and the fresh rose leaves. Leave your fears, girl ; you may provoke such comparisons, for you were born to conquer them all.”

The girl darted a keen glance, like an arrow, upon him ; he received it, shrinking his sparkling eyes.

Santa Croce replied :

“ We have come, Count Cenci, as relatives and friends, to share your happiness, which I hope is great, for I have never seen you in such good humor ; you may, indeed, emulate the good old man of Taos.”

“I was wrong in not trying to acquire this humor, Prince ; and what is worse, I have tried too late. The Parcæ, you know—or rather you do not know—for you, most eminent cardinals, holds these stories as heresies. Most Holy Cardinals, show respect for the conquered ; exiles sometimes return, and Fortune has not yet nailed the axis of her wheel. Jupiter was a god, and knew the way that leads to heaven. On the throne or out of it, gods and kings are sacred ; and it does not become them to teach disrespect to the multitude. They learn it soon enough by themselves. And then again, you should not show anger towards those who believe too much—attack those who believe little ; persecute those who believe nothing ; I cannot yet understand how you could have limited your belief in restricting to only three the deities that form your Godhead, and mine ; you should have instituted a prize of a million years’ of indulgence for him who can believe the most.

“But where did I leave off ? Let me see—ah ! at the Parcæ. Now, the Parcæ spin for us days of black wool, mixed with a very few of a golden color ; human wisdom consists in separating them ; we weep during the sad days, laugh in the happy ones, or else we should turn our lives into an eternal funeral service for the dead. *Omnia tempus habent*—and although, like the most wise King Solomon, I do not admit of there being a time to kill, I agree with him when he declares all things are *vanitas vanitatum*—if we may except, perhaps, a glass of cold water when one is thirsty—provided, however, it is not from the *Tophana*, which is made at Perugia, or that other, of which the Holy Pontiff, Alexander VI., of most holy memory, knew the secret.”

The Lord Treasurer observed, maliciously :

“This jovialty of yours—perhaps excessive—is wont to manifest itself thus intemperately in persons whom it rarely visits ; it has somewhat the nature of a fever ; and this idea is con-

firmed, when I think that a short time since death saddened your house."

"Ah, my lord, why recall it to my memory? We cannot let some recollections fall to the ground, without some officiously pious friend gathering them up, and restoring them, saying: 'Look, a bitter remembrance has dropped from your heart; put it back in its place.' But no one should be surprised at this, much less my Lord Treasurer, whom we all know is so well versed in divine lore. Have I not imitated King David? Do I not take my examples from a good family? Like him, after the death of his son, I have said, 'While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"

Beatrice, at this shameless hypocrisy, trembled painfully.

"But come," cried all the guests, "release us from our anxiety. We are impatient to share your happiness by the knowledge of it."

"Noble friends! if you had said we are impatient to satisfy our curiosity, which is excited, you would have spoken more truly, and more sincerely. But you labor in vain, for I do not intend to waste my good news on empty bodies. No, gentlemen; God sends his dew, morning and evening, upon the flowers ready to receive it, not at noon upon burnt stones. First, prepare yourselves with the gifts of Ceres and Bacchus, as a poet-laureate would say, and then you shall hear my news—the gospel *secundum comitem Franciscum Cincium*. To dinner, then, noble friends, to dinner."

"Lady Lucrezia," whispered Beatrice in the ear of her step-mother, "some dreadful misfortune is hanging over our heads! His eyes never sparkled with so much malice before. He

laughed like a wolf when he seizes the hare by the throat to suck his blood."

"May God forgive me ; I know not why, but I tremble also."

"Who has told you, mother, that I trembled ? Neither my body nor my soul trembles."

And they seated themselves at the table. Count Cenci took the head, according to the custom then of giving the master of the house the most honorable place ; by his side, right and left, sat his family, then followed the guests as the steward placed them, according to the rank and dignity of each. The dishes were many and exquisite, all served in different forms ; some, for example, in the shape of the Coliseum, others like a galley, on one side a rock of veal assaulted by waves of jelly, a fortress of cake, being cut open, gave exit to a number of live birds, who, flying through the hall, filled it with sweet warbling ; from an enormous pie came out the dwarfish clown of the house, dressed like the Pope, who, gravely giving the guests his Apostolic blessing, went away. Strange and satirical ideas, according as the Count's sneering nature had suggested to him ; but, not to weary with too long a description, I will conclude (to give a proof of how much this man dared) by showing how he had the audacity to represent before the cardinals of the church the symbol of the Eucharist, in form of an enormous boiled goose with some small roasted peacocks arranged about it, in such a way as to figure the mystic Pelican, which opens its breast to feed his little ones on his own blood.

The glasses went round often and fast, like a shuttle in the hands of a weaver ; they drank various wines, both native and foreign, Cyprus, Greek, Xeres, Alicante, and other Spanish wines ; for our fathers, whether they were right or not, preferred Spanish wines, ripened beneath a burning sun, to the French and Roman, born rather from the sighs than from the looks of the Planet of



Life. After—to use a classical expression, which, as usual, is more able to express clearly the idea—they had satisfied the natural desire for food and drink, the guests, spurred by curiosity, exclaimed with one voice :

“Is it not yet time to appease our anxiety? Come, Count Cenci, give us the reason for your happiness?”

“The time has come,” said Count Cenci with a solemn voice; then, with his most austere expression, continued: “However, my noble friends, I beg you first to answer this question. If I had ardently, earnestly implored of God one favor above all others—a prayer which I murmured as I dropped to sleep, and which was the first whisper of my waking lips—if God, who had heard this request repeated by holy priests during the sacrifice of the mass, by the chants of consecrated virgins, by the prayers of his poor; if God, I say, long after I had despaired of being heard, most suddenly, most unexpectedly, beyond my hope, had shown me his infinite mercy, and granted my desire to the full, should I not have reason to rejoice? And if so, exult with me—for I am indeed happy—happy in the fullest meaning of the word!”

“Beatrice—my daughter—support me—I am afraid.”

“Help yourself as you can,” replied Beatrice, “for I cannot—for my head whirls around, and all the guests seem to me as if swimming in blood!”

“Oh God!” added Lucrezia, “a fearful shudder creeps over me, as of a coming fever.”

“I suppose, noble friends and kinsmen, that you all know, and if any one is ignorant let him now learn,” continued the Count, “that I caused to be built in the church of Saint Thomas seven tombs of precious marble, and of exquisite workmanship, and I then prayed the Lord, to grant me before dying the favor of burying within them all my children; and then I vowed to burn my palace, the church, the furniture and sacred vestments in one joyous fire. If I was Nero, I would also have sworn to burn Rome a second time.”



The guests gazed at each other more in astonishment than terror ; then looking at the Count, they thought, blushing for him, that he had been carried away by too much drinking. Beatrice kept her head bent down, her face pale as the withered rose is her hair. But the Count with louder voice continued :

“ One I have already buried ; two others, through God’s mercy, I am allowed to bury now : two are in my hands, which is almost as good as to have them lying in their tombs : we are drawing nearer to the end. God, who shows such manifest signs of his favor to me, will certainly, before I die, fulfill my prayers.”

“ Count ! you should have chosen a less sad theme for jest than this.”

“ It is a very wicked pleasure to take delight in other’s fear !”

“ Do I jest ? Read.”

And taking several letters from his bosom, he threw them on the table.

“ Read—examine them at your ease ; inform yourself of all ; I give them to you for that purpose. You will learn that two other of my detested children died at Salamanca—how did they die ? It matters little to me—what I care most about is, they are dead, closed and nailed within two oaken coffins that I had ordered. Now there remains but a few more ducats to spend on them, and this I willingly do—two wax candles—a couple of masses—if they were cart loads of quicklime, that their souls might be burned by it, I would order two thousand to be thrown into their tombs. Oh ! Pope Clement, you who condemned me to pay them four thousand ducats yearly, will you oblige me to pay to them now ? The worms will give you no memorial, no ; in due time they will devour even you. Oh, pious Cardinal Aldobrandino, will you now be moved to pity by the worms ? Omnipotent God ! receive my expression of deep gratitude ; thou hast raised my soul not according to my merits, but according to the treasure of thy infinite mercy !”

My Lord Treasurer, trembling with emotion, said :

“ Alas ! my noble lords, pay no attention to him, his reason is drowned in wine, or perhaps even a greater misfortune has befallen it. But a manifest sign that he utters a falsehood, Christian men, you have in this, that God could not receive thanks so against nature ; and if what escapes from the lips of this madman were true, God would have made the roof of this house to fall upon his head.”

“ He has not done so on account of the painting, which would be lost ; and also because you are here, most Reverend Cardinals, pillars of the holy church. You know God does not always strike directly ; and sometimes hurling his thunderbolts at random, he kills the priest who is celebrating mass, and spares the thief who is stealing. Treasurer, Treasurer, you should be joyful that God minds my words no more than your hands. Pick-pocket of the Holy Mother Church, if it is well for me that He is deaf, it is also well for you that He is blind. But even if He heard me, I have accustomed Him to hear worse things !”

The guests, in looking upon the Count, seemed to have experienced the effect produced by Medusa’s head. Their wicked host, enjoying the terror he inspired, continued exultingly :

“ For my own part I am only glad that my sons are dead ; but perhaps you would like to know how they died. Lend me your ears. Felix, who was a very pious youth, stood one evening reciting very devoutly his rosary in the church of the Madonna del Pilastro. The *Mater Misericordiæ*, to let him know his prayers were heard by her, let fall the principal beam from the roof upon his head, and gently broke his neck. The same evening, or rather at the same hour, as they write me, Christopher was killed with a knife, by a certain jealous husband, who mistook him for the lover, who was at that very moment making love to his wife. For which circumstances, considering the time, the hour, the equal manner of their deaths, I declare him an

incurable heretic, and a fit subject of excommunication, who presumes boldly to deny that this could have happened without the express will of Providence."

Beatrice, as if her whole soul were transformed into her eyes, looked at him ; and Count Cenci from time to time would glance at her, and these glances meeting, would flash and sparkle like the swords of enemies. Bernardino, as if sleepy, hid his face in the bosom of Lady Lucrezia, who, with tearful eyes and outstretched arms, looked like the *Madonna of Seven Woes*. Of the guests, some, with clenched hands upon the table, menaced him with a fierce look ; others pointed an accusing finger at him ; some looked incredulous, others shut their ears ; some looked fearfully up as if expecting a thunderbolt from heaven.

The Cardinals and Treasurer were the first to rise, saying :

Let us go ! let us go ! Save yourselves all of you, for the wrath of God can no longer delay in falling on this wicked house !"

An unquiet murmur, increasing like the wind before the tempest, an ill-suppressed shuddering, spread throughout the hall ; then all at once burst forth cries of shame and reproach, lamenting and groaning : finally, all, as if overcome by the same passion, thrust at the same moment a hand with a curse towards the Count.

" Stop !" he fiercely cried, " what are you doing ? here is no scene, here are no spectators, so that if you mean to act a tragedy, your labor is vain. Is it becoming in you, most holy Cardinals, to pretend a horror for blood ? Tell me, why your dress is red ? Is it not because the stain of blood may not be distinguished upon it ? Away, you mountebanks, who sell your Christ like wine at a fair ! Away, you Pharisees, who would make Christ himself, should he return to earth, fly to Mecca and become a Turk. And you, Prince Colonna, be not astonished ; I advise you to be calm, for I lived long enough at Rocca Petrella to know all your words and actions ; and if you do not know, I can tell you

more of necromancy than you would like, having even the power to make the tombs and dead speak. You understand me, Prince ; and what I have learned of your affairs, I can whisper in your ears. To you I speak now, my illustrious Lord Treasurer : I advise you not to forget that I am the son of my father ; and that my father was a treasurer, and in business accounts I feel competent to match the best accountants of the apostolic chamber. You are fortunate, Treasurer, that other business keeps me engaged—no matter what ! You are fortunate that I have not time enough, or I might take a fancy to lead our mutual friend Cardinal Aldobrandino through the labyrinth of the treasury. Treasurer, recollect the weazel of Esop, and tremble lest you should not come out of your hole. Cover the ditch for somebody else with deceitful herbs, so that incautiously stepping upon it, he may disappear quietly—ecclesiastically. I am a big wave, roaring and foaming—I may break against rocks on the shore ; but first I overthrow, and swallow everything that comes in my way. Respect your master, fall at my feet and worship me.”

The guests, with a sign of disgust, drew nearer the door ready to leave the cursed house ; but Count Cenci cried out :

“ Noble friends and kinsmen, you cannot go from my house without my taking leave of you. Come ! be kind enough to grant me the favor of your company a moment longer.”

Then taking a large glass of brilliant crystal, he filled it to the brim with Cyprus wine, and raising it against the light of the candles, it seemed as if filled with fire, and said :

“ Oh, blood of the vine, that, grown in the sun’s rays, sparkling and bubbling gaily in the light of the candles, as my soul leaped and exulted at the news of my sons’ death—oh ! were you their mingled blood, matured beneath the fire of my curse, and shed as a sacrifice to my vengeance, I would drink you as devoutly as the wine of the Eucharist ; and toasting Satan, I would

say : ' Angel of Evil, burst forth from hell ; mount with swift wings after the souls of Felix and Christopher, my sons, before they can approach the gate of Heaven, and drag them down to eternal woe, and torment them with the most atrocious agonies that your diabolical imagination can invent. And if you can not find enough, consult me : I trust to finding new tortures, to which your fancy cannot reach. Oh Satan ! to your health I inebriate myself into an abyss of joy. Triumph in my triumph !' Now, noble friends and kinsmen, I have no longer need of your company ; you are at liberty to go or stay."

"By the Holy Apostles, this man has become raving mad !"

"Ah ! I always knew him wicked enough to make even Angels weep."

"Say rather, to make devils gnash their teeth."

"At any rate he is a fierce wild beast, it is best to tie him."

"Yes, really, chain him—let us chain him."

Count Cenci, after finishing his diabolical invocation, sat quietly down, and taking some confectionery, ate it with the utmost calmness. When some of the guests gathered around him menacingly, without even raising his head, he called :

"Olimpio !"

At this call the bandit appeared, whom the cunning old man had kept hidden, and with him twenty more desperate looking men, armed like *bravi*. They surrounded the guests with drawn poniards, ready at the Count's order to shed their blood.

Cenci stood some time eating confectionery, and watching the fear, which paled their faces : then he rose, and walking in the midst of them with slow steps, and gazing maliciously at them, said with a sneer :

"You, who are learned, must remember the feast prepared for the Senators by Domitian.\* However, be not afraid, I will

\* Cuvier, History of the Roman Emperors, book xvii., § 2.



not order *bring the dessert*.\* Indiscreet men ! Do you not know, that although the Cenci is no longer a red-hot iron as in his youth, he still is hot enough to burn ? A man oftener burns himself with an iron half heated, than with one red-hot—beware ! My revenge is like the sealed dispatches of kings. It surely contains a death ; though the one upon whom, where, and when it will fall is not known. Leave me in peace, and as soon as you have passed the threshold forget everything. Let everything which has happened be like a dream, which a man hates to remember when he awakes. Mind, the word is winged : like the raven of the ark, it never comes back ; but it stays away to feed upon corpses, and sometimes it makes them. If, however, your throat feels as if changing to a flute—then you may speak.”

The guests, all frightened, and some stupid with horror, others with rage in their souls, were departing. Beatrice, shaking her hair from her head upon her shoulders, furiously reproached them thus :

“ Cowards ! are you of Latin race ? are you sons of the old Romans ? yes, as worms are the children of the horse that lies dead in battle ! An old man frightens you ; a few ruffians freeze your blood ! you depart—depart, and leave two weak women and a miserable boy in the hands of this man—three hearts beating in the vulture’s claws. Did you hear ? he does not hide it—he will make us die—and notwithstanding—alas ! gentlemen, mark my words, and understand more than they can or ought to tell you—notwithstanding that, this is the least evil I fear from him. I do not speak to you, Priests ; but to you, Knights, when you girded on your swords did not you swear to defend the widow and orphan ? we are worse than orphans—they have no father, and we have an executioner for one—remember your

\* *Bring the dessert*, in ancient times meant an order to murder treacherously. See the account of Friar Alberigo in Dante’s *Inferno*, Canto xxxiii.



daughters, noble Knights—remember your daughters, Christian Fathers—and have pity on us—take us to your homes.”

“Young girl, your grief makes us sad, but we can do nothing for you,” said several of the guests.

“Wait and hope. Hope will yet bring forth roses of happiness for you,” replied a cardinal.

“If prayers and vows can avail you, my dear daughter, we will never cease from praying for you.”

And the rest proffered similar words—cold and mournful, like drops of holy water sprinkled upon a bier. The guests departed, and did not breathe freely until they gained the open air outside the palace.

All left the hall : Count Cenci and Beatrice remained alone, except Marzio, who, near a side table, seemed busied in collecting the silver dishes.

“Now are you satisfied ?” Count Cenci said, with burning lips, to Beatrice. “You know how the help of God tastes ? do you think man’s help is worth more ? It is no use to put a bandage on the eyes of Justice, that she may not be moved ; leave them open—let her see—she will not be affected by the sight. Might is right ; might and right were twin-born of the same birth and embraced each other. I know it ; I have proved it, and every day I see and feel it more : might is right. Look round, girl, and you will see that no refuge is left you upon heaven or earth, except in my bosom : look there, and you will find the asylum which God and men, equally deaf and wicked, refuse you. That I love you greatly, you already know, since I hate everything in heaven or on earth, except you. Throw yourself into my arms : you may in vain seek another man equal to me : I have inherited the gifts of all ages. The strength of youth has not yet left me : in me is the wisdom of mature age, and the tenacity of old age. Love me then, Beatrice—beautiful—terrible girl—love me.”

“Father, if I said I hated you, or even feared you ; I should

not speak the truth. God has created in you a scourge like a famine, plague or war, and this scourge he has thrown upon me. I bend, without murmuring, my head to his mysterious decrees ; and the more hopeless I am of all human aid, the more I draw nearer to God, and trust my fate to his mercy. Father, for pity's sake, kill me !”

The desolate girl threw herself at the Count's feet with open arms as if awaiting the stroke.

Why did Beatrice suddenly start to her feet, and throw herself upon her father ? Why with both hands did she screen his head ? why did she utter that scream of terror, which echoed through the most remote rooms of the spacious palace, she, who feared nothing ?

Marzio, who had unobserved remained in the hall, hearing the words which had openly revealed the infernal design of Count Cenci, softly approached, holding in his hands a heavy silver vase ; and was on the point of letting it fall with all his force upon the Count's head ; and would have done it ; for the Count, unawares, stood perfectly motionless gazing at his daughter.

The Count starting at her cry and motion, raised involuntarily his face towards heaven, and saw a flash dazzling his eyes—“ Ah ! may it not be the delayed thunderbolt of the wrath of God ?” This idea flashed like lightning into his mind, but contained an eternity of torment for his wicked soul. But not for this did the old man start ; and reassured, he turned his eye fiercely round the room, and saw Marzio, who impassible was replacing the vase upon the sideboard.

“ Marzio—you here ?”

“ Your Excellency !”

“ You here ?”

“ At the orders of your Excellency.”

“ Go.”

He bowed, and went out, casting a look at Beatrice, as if to say : " why did you prevent me ?"

But Beatrice, in her impetuous passion, pressed with super-human strength the Count's arm, as if to drag him away, exclaiming :

" Come unfortunate old man, you have not a moment to lose. Death is covering you with his wings. Come, the measure of your sins hurls you to perdition. Put on sackcloth, old man ! cover your head with ashes ; you have sinned enough. Penitence is a burning baptism ; but fire purifies more and better than water. If your prayers cannot reach the throne of God, but threaten to fall back upon your head like hailstones of malediction, I will stand by your side, and add mine, too, and they shall both be heard ; both accepted, or both rejected. And if justice requires a victim as expiation—behold, I willingly offer my life in redemption for your soul ; but hasten, old man, the edge of the grave is slippery—old man, remember your eternal safety depends upon it."

Count Cenci stood listening and smiling. When she had finished, with mocking tone he replied :

" It is well, my beloved Beatrice ; you alone can teach me the celestial joys of Paradise. I will come and find you to-night, and we will pray together."

Beatrice let fall her father's arm. The words and malignant expression had the power of chilling all her enthusiasm, and brought her back to the stern reality of life. She departed with a dejected countenance, murmuring :

" Lost !—lost !—Oh, lost ! without a hope !"

Count Cenci poured hastily another glass of wine, and drank it at one swallow.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FIRE.

Satanasso (perchè altri esser non puote)  
Strugge e ruina la casa infelice.  
Volgiti, e mira le fumose ruote  
Della rovente fiamma predatrice ;  
Ascolta il pianto, che nel ciel percuote.      **ARIOSO.**

GREAT was the misfortune and grief which fell upon the poor carpenter and his family ! Husband, wife, and child were all sleeping in a room over the shop.

They slept—but a fearful dream disturbed the wife : it seemed to her as if an enormous monster, with fiery eyes, a hairy body, and wings like a bat, pressed with his hind legs upon her body, and with his fore legs on her throat, as if to strangle her ; she strived to move, and could not ; endeavored to scream, but could not succeed. At last, by a desperate effort, she moved ; her eyes were so heavy, she could scarcely open them ; yet two lights, now violet color, now blue, like flame from alcohol, were visible to her. Her temples throbbed with pain, as if a demon were pressing his hot burning fingers upon them, making them beat with agony. Her throat was dry and bitter, as if she had just tasted a bitter herb ; she succeeded finally in opening her eyes, and saw upon the floor a net of fire, which seemed to come from the cracks of the floor, and the whole room appeared full of smoke—an insupportable heat filled the air ; little by little the floor cracked, and from the holes made by the falling of the

bricks, tongues of flame burst forth, which in a few seconds increased to a horrible fire.

"Fire !—fire !" screamed the woman, turning her eyes round in affright ; and leaped from her bed to seize upon her child in its cradle.

"Fire !" screamed the startled husband ; and, undressed as he was, ran towards the door, and opened it. This gave an ingress to the flames which enveloped the room ; the whole house was in a blaze ; he retraced his steps, and grasped with one arm his wife, with the other his child, and rushed out to gain the stairs. The stones of the steps, heated by the fire, cracked noisily ; the fire upon the ground floor raged furiously in a vortex like a whirlwind, and sent forth a roaring like a hurricane. The clothing of the mother and child was already on fire ; but the mother, although dragged along, stretched out her hands and extinguished it on the flesh of her child. Their hair smoked, they suffered painful burns upon feet, face, hands, and arms. On ! on ! if they can only reach the door of the house ! They near it ; one step more, and they will touch it ; they have reached it—but, oh, woe ! they cannot open it—they shake it—they beat upon it ; in vain—it had been bolted on the outside.

Surrounded by a vortex of flames, the miserable father, his heart beating wildly, his breast panting, retakes his child in his arms—and leaves his wife—he is too weak for both. Raving, unknowing what to do, he turns and returns through the entrance, and then wildly strives to ascend the staircase.

The wife followed so closely, that she placed her foot where he raised his ; and the husband was invigorated by her breathing which he felt in the hot air on his shoulders—she always defending her child from the flames, and sometimes her husband.

He gained the room ; but here his courage and his breath failed him—his eyes glittered in death, and he staggered and almost fell ; but had just strength enough to replace the child in

the arms of its mother before expiring—he could not utter a word—only with a look, like a light before going out, he expressed the desolation which lips cannot speak—a desolation, which if it could have been conveyed in words, would have uttered this : “I do not recommend him to you, for you cannot save him !” Then, falling back five or six steps, struck madly against the wall, attempting to grasp it with his hands.

The next morning could have been seen the marks of blood from his hands and feet burnt upon the walls and floors.

It always happens in cases of harsh necessity, both in the physical appetites as in the passions of the soul, that the more intense are lost in the less deep ones ; and hence the wife paid no further attention to the husband, who was so dear to her, but with all her force embraced the body of her child. She opened the window and looked out.

Groups of people in the street saw a figure delineated in black upon a field of fire, and had compassion and fear for her. She uttered a cry—only one—but so mournfully sharp, so madly desperate and wild, that the hearts of the bystanders felt as if pierced by a sword. They wished to help her, and consulted together ; but the old men, with that great Roman calmness, projecting their under lip, and crossing their arms, looked pitifully on the fire, saying : “we can do nothing for it : water would not be enough ; and no one but a devil can pass through those flames. You know what is alone to be done : to see the fire go out by itself, and then say prayers for those poor souls, gone out of the world without sacrament.”

Now, it had so happened that Luisa Cenci, a prey to jealousy, had wandered, dressed in man’s attire for several nights, and on this one also, about the carpenter’s house to surprise her husband ; but as yet her search had proved vain. Notwithstanding this, not a shadow of doubt crossed her mind that she might have been deceived ; but instead, she wondered



in her mind whether Giacomo visited her by night, or whether she met him elsewhere, or whether they had quarrelled, or had a thousand other ways of tormenting herself with an error, instead of consoling herself with the plainer way of truth ! Very sad condition of men in general, and of women in particular, to give willing credit to evil, and to hold tenaciously the impression which one has formed in his mind, although injurious to one's own dignity or person.

She then ran, like the others, attracted by the screams and blaze of fire, about the house ; and when she saw it, her heart exulted : " that which sin gave, justice has taken away," she thought.

She remained motionless, looking at the accident ; and if her desires had not kindled the flames, neither did they extinguish them.

Before the fire had reached to such an ungovernable fury, some neighbors had gone in search of ladders and ropes, and were returning with a ladder, which they had found in a church close by : they placed it against the wall, raised their faces, but did not move, because the flames, breaking through above and below, showed it to be a desperate undertaking. But when the mother, appearing through the flames, supporting her child, and crying : " save my son ! " Oh ! then one—yes, one alone—felt her heart moved, and this was Luisa Cenci. The woman was silent within her, but the mother spoke ! rushing quickly to the foot of the ladder, she exclaimed hastily :

" Come ; the distance is short, the undertaking not difficult : Romans, which of you will ascend to save them shall have one hundred golden ducats."

And as no one stirred, she called again : " good Christians, courage ; two hundred ducats to him who saves them."

Nor was this reward enough to move them ; for the fear of the danger surpassed the desire for money. Luisa stood for a

moment reflecting—she could dispose of only one hundred more, which spent, not one would remain for her own children, nor could she expect to obtain any more from her father-in-law. No matter, she thought a moment after, and then with louder voice, as if to recall lost time, she exclaimed :

“ Three hundred ducats to him who saves them ! three hundred golden ducats, I say—enough to marry two daughters ! Romans ! does no one dare ? Clear the way for me, then—clear the way, I say ! God help me ! ”

And light as a bird she ascended the ladder, while the top, which was leaning against the wall, was already smoking. Coming to the window, she said :

“ Give me ”—and at the same time a voice said :

“ Take the child.”

They had understood each other. Both mothers, they knew the highest desire of a maternal heart is the safety of her child. She descended. A young man, ashamed that no one had attempted to move, ascended to the middle of the ladder, and receiving the child in his arms, carried it to a place of safety.

Luisa reascended, while tongues of flame darted about the ladder like vipers ; being quenched wherever she put her hands, but rekindling more vividly after raising them. Arrived face to face with the woman whom she supposed had taken from her her husband's love, she courageously stretched her arms—her arms to her who had embraced the father of her children. The woman threw herself wildly into them. The mother of Christ, looking from Heaven upon this embrace, might be proud to be a woman. Certainly, neither human nor celestial eyes had witnessed for ages such an act of charity.

Luisa firmly grasped her rival by her waist, and descended.

Haste, Luisa, for the ladder is burning ; haste, Luisa, for the charred rounds crack with the fire. Oh, holy Virgin ! why does she stop ? One second may be fatal. Unmindful of herself,

unmindful of the imminent danger, unmindful of everything, she cannot resist the great desire of looking upon her rival's face, and seeing by the light of the fire if she surpassed her in beauty. Woman's heart ! Although horribly distorted by grief and fear, with her hair scorched, her face spotted with burns, she looked, as she really was, most beautiful.

" Ah !" she cried, " how beautiful she is," and staggered upon the ladder.

She had come within three steps of the ground, when the floor fell in with a terrible crash ; the flames disappeared, clouds of smoke mixed with myriads of sparks surrounded the house, the ladder, and the women. A fearful cry echoed even to the shores of the Tiber, for they thought the two had been killed by the fire and the fall.

Then all at once the fire, like pride humbled for a moment, blazed more terribly than before, and from the midst of the flames Luisa appeared with the woman in her arms unburnt.

Cries of joy, furious shouts rent the skies : " Who is the brave fellow ?" " I do not know." " Did you ever see him before ?" " Never." " He has no beard on his face, and seems too slender for such a deed of valor. Hurrah for the valiant youth ; true Latin blood ;" and the enthusiasm and applause grew louder and louder.

The Lord had mercy upon the wife of the carpenter, who, being beside herself, knew not the sad fate of her husband. Luisa, more fervid in her generosity, as the good always are, would not allow the woman to be carried to the hospital ; but recollecting a certain widow of her acquaintance, who would take care of her, thought to have her brought to her own house, so much the more, that finding she had saved the three hundred ducats, which she had risked for this family ; even should she now spend half, still there would be some left for herself.

She then, in order to accomplish her design, had the woman

placed upon a sheet, held at each corner by men who willingly offered to do this office. She carried the child on her own bosom, asking, at the same time, for some one to support her also, as her head was whirling, and she felt the ground receding from under her feet. From the crowd pressing about her, a stout, robust man appeared, his head, neck and face covered by a mass of hair and beard, dressed like one of the peasants of the Roman suburbs.

"Lean on me," he said, offering his arm with a voice more tender than his hard bronzed face would have given hope for. "Lean upon it, for it would support even the Trajan column. I feel able, if it does not incommode you, to carry you and the child both."

"I believe it. May God reward you. This is enough. Now move on gently to the street of St. Lorenzo Panisperna to the Cenci's house."

"Cenci's house !" exclaimed the man, starting back.

"Why do you wonder at it ? Perhaps you think my house so great a stranger to charity as to cause surprise. Pray, what gives you a right to think so, peasant ?"

And as the man, without replying, merely shook his head, Lady Luisa, as if offended, added :

"If you wish to know who dared to ascend the ladder, while you men all remained immovable by fear, I will tell you—'twas a woman ; and you see in me the wife of Don Giacomo Cenci, and daughter-in-law of Count Cenci."

The peasant staggered ; he pressed his hand to his forehead, as if to prevent his thoughts and feelings from escaping.

I will not make this peasant a mystery. I can tell you at once it was Olimpio, and the four supporters of the sheet that carried the woman were his companions and accomplices in the horrible fire. Do not believe that any hypocritical feelings urged them to this act, or craftiness to better screen themselves ;

for they had committed the crime with so much shrewdness, as to leave no room for suspecting it had been done through malice rather than accident ; but they were ennobled by the magnanimous daring of Luisa, and were really sincere. Man, however wicked he may be, still cherishes some good ; and among those not accustomed to moderate their passions, either good or bad, or to dissimulate them, the transition from evil to good happens suddenly. I do not know whether man is born totally depraved. The holy Scriptures say so, and the holy doctors of the Church have approved it ; but, nevertheless, I cannot affirm it decisively. It seems to me that either goodness embroiders a covering for wickedness, or wickedness one for virtue. He who is accustomed to make up an account with his soul the least often, and lets himself be carried away by the sudden impulses of his senses, would perhaps be the better if too much ignorance, depraved habits, or persuasion of others did not shut a way for him to do good, and push him further into the path of evil.

The unfortunate woman was very gently carried to the house of Luisa Cenci, who, with Olimpio, had preceded her ; and with that thoughtfulness which women alone possess, had already a bed prepared, and wax, oil, cotton, and other remedies which were used for burns ; she also sent for a surgeon and the widow. The latter fortunately lived in the same street, and came immediately.

The poor woman was delirious all night, sometimes weeping softly, then desperately, according as her excited fancy imagined things, pleasing or hideous. The day after she was no better, but on the next, her mental faculties were somewhat restored, and she asked for her child. They told her he was near her, sleeping ; she tried to move, but could not, and with feeble voice said :

“ For God’s sake, do not deceive me !” they reassured her, and she wept. Then asking for her husband, and, with a neces-



sary deception, they said : he was lying badly hurt at the hospital, not without, however, a hope of recovery.

Luisa, who still disguised, watched by her, comforted her to be of good cheer, and keep silent ; since otherwise she would only add to her illness, and delay the pleasure of embracing her child, and she then remained silent.

Luisa had become much attached to this lonely widow, which was not strange ; since an offence given is a reason for offending, so one good act persuades to another ; and we love others less for the good they bestow upon us, than for the cares they cost us. But whether this happens from constancy, presumption, or other good or bad qualities, I cannot say ; but this I know, that although it is difficult to give a true motive for our actions, it is never a single motive, but twisted and woven with threads partly furnished by angels, and partly by devils. What was the proportion of these threads in the soul of Lady Luisa, we cannot judge ; but it is best to believe they were all angelical ; enough for me to say, she loved the widow cordially.

It cannot be said how much inclined she felt to know the particulars of her husband's intercourse with her ; but a thousand considerations detained her from satisfying it. In the first place, it did not seem honorable to take advantage of her weak state, to draw out her secret : neither Christian-like, or consistent with the generosity she had been showing her, to retard her recovery by making her talk ; and finally, having conceived a doubt, although a very weak one, about the truth of her suspicions, she preferred rather to waver in the uncertainty, than despair in the hated reality.

But no measure is so quickly filled as that of impatience. One day she was seated by the bed of the widow ; Angiolina, for this was her name, was looking devoutly in the face of Luisa, and whispered blessings and prayers. Luisa in her turn looked long at her ; she noticed the hue of health gradually returning



to her cheeks, the burns had left no scars, and she was becoming as handsome as ever. The heart of the jealous woman beat impetuously in her bosom, as with a bitter smile she asked :

“ But am I really your only protector ?”

“ Who do you suppose would care for a poor woman like me, except you, with your charity ?”

“ Ah, yes—really—I am afraid your memory is not good just now.”

“ Ah ! you say the truth,” exclaimed Angiolina, blushing as if she had committed a fault. “ Good Lord ! how could I be so ungrateful ?”

“ Then you have another protector ?”

“ Another protector, as you say, who has been very kind to us.”

“ Indeed ! and what is his name ?”

“ His name is Count Cenci.”

“ Cenci ? Cenci did you say ? Cenci ?” cried Luisa as if stung by a viper, and she was silent. But Angiolina, as if to express her gratitude, and a desire of correcting her involuntary fault, added passionately :

“ The kindest and best gentleman above all whom I have known, except you. He rebuilt our house, which had been ruined by the water, and now the fire has destroyed : he wanted me to buy fine clothes—pride of an hour ; and reproved me for not asking him to be god-father to my child.”

Luisa bit her lips until the blood came, and then with bitter voice interrupted her, saying :

“ Enough !”

And while, in order not to betray herself, she hastily withdrew, overcome by different passions, she murmured :

“ Insolent ! Not even restrained from proclaiming her own shame. Oh God ! do you really command us to nurse the snake that stings our hearts ?”

## CHAPTER XII.

### M A R C O .

Sol l'Asino gentil, l'Asino fino  
Lodar si debbe, e mi par che sia quello  
Da scriverne in volgar, greco, e latino.  
SIMONEI, *Dell' Asino.*

VERDIANA had looked for the twentieth time out of the window, and as many times had numbered the steps that, according to her calculations, separated the parsonage from Rome. She went into the field, and although trembling on her legs, she bent her ear to the ground to listen if any noise betokened the coming of the curate ; nothing. She got up, sang the litanies, the *Stabat Mater* ; told her beads ten times over ; finally, losing all patience, she grumbled :

“Just think ! how the blessed man delays this morning—but why do I say morning ? it is long after noon, and the soup has become like glue. I don’t see what prevents me from dining alone ; and then if he comes, and can’t eat, all the worse for him. Perhaps he is detained by business—or some accident has befallen Marco (the name of the curate’s ass)—or the poor curate himself. Alas ! what am I saying ? Should any accident befall Marco, I see no reason why it should not befall the curate also. Most Blessed Virgin ? As far as accidents go, there is no sort of difference between Marco and the curate, and like the tables of an inn-keeper, they are always ready for both man and beast.”

She took her needles, upon which hung a half finished stocking, and began to knit with great celerity : whoever had observed her would have easily noticed, that while a sad thought was springing up in her mind, two tears were slowly gathering in her eyes ; the tears and the thought burst forth at the same moment, and throwing her needles impatiently down, she exclaimed :

“ Surely ! if some misfortune has happened to the poor man, he will no longer need stockings or shoes. Well, why, after all, may he not need them ? Do all accidents render stockings useless ? ”

She retook her needles, thrusting them diligently into the stitches.

“ And dead or alive,” she continued, “ the stockings will be good for somebody.” Then she replaced the ball of thread in her pocket : “ Good for some poor man—and even for myself.”

For the love of truth, let us say, that Verdiana thought of herself, after the curate and his ass, after her neighbors, after everybody ; her charity had gone as far as it could, and returned again to the centre. On the other hand, with the same love of impartiality, we must add, that her hands did not fly so swiftly as when the chances were that the stockings might be for herself.

Suddenly the air resounded with the braying of Marco. Verdiana ran to the window, and from behind the hedge appeared at the same time the beloved heads of both the curate and the ass : not that she ever compared one with the other ; God forbid ! But if the great merits of the curate could not be denied, neither could those of the ass, for he had his also ; and as for the curate, he had never, like Marco, drunk the moon.

Drunk the moon ? So it was believed for some time in the house, and out of it, although by the curate’s persuasions Verdiana had her doubts ; but Giannicchio could not be made to disbelieve it, he would have affirmed it even under the torture.

Giannicchio was a boy poorer than Lazarus ; he wore clothes

which were composed of one half mud, and the other half of patches of every size and color ; piled one upon the other as a crowd of beggars standing on tip-toe at the convent gate, and thrusting their kettles towards the capuchin friar who deals out the soup. Giannicchio was one of those poor devils, who never received any other blessing from Mother Nature than a slap upon the face. Whatever he attempted to do, never succeeded : If he took a dish in his hands he was sure to break it ; if he went to assist anybody, he either knocked his own head against a wall, or the person's nose whom he intended to help ; if asked to bring water, he would mistake and bring fire. The curate often said, he must have worked as mason at the building of the tower of Babel. Yet Giannicchio the *unlucky*, as he was nicknamed, was good-natured, obliging and kind, living in the curate's house, where he at least found something to eat.

Now it must be known that in the parsonage yard there was a well, and near it a trough where the horses drank, and which also served for washing clothes. One evening Marco returned home late, having been lent that day to the doctor ; and not only did he return late, but tired and hot also. The moon or *Trivia*, as Dante says, "smiled in mild fullness," her round face reflected in the little water at the bottom of the trough as a fine lady looks into a sixpenny mirror, when she can get nothing better. Giannicchio led the ass to the trough, and looking in it, saw there the moon. The thirsty donkey greedily drank every drop of water and the moon disappeared. Giannicchio, frightened, began to cry out that the ass had drunk the moon. Such was Giannicchio.

"Here come the long expected ones !" exclaimed Verdiana, hastily running towards the curate and the ass. She threw her arms around Marco's neck, showing her affection like Sancho Panza ; kissed the curate's hand, and assisted him to dismount. Among the poor, grief for a loss is generally more deeply felt than the hope of gain, and Verdiana's lamentations over the

curate's torn robe, and the bad condition of the rest of his clothes cannot be described : more sorrowful, too, since the clouded face of the curate seemed to fortell an unprosperous journey.

"I already suspect," said Verdiana, "that the promise of ask and it shall be given has again failed :" and brushing the dust off the curate, she continued : "the holy Gospel must mean grace given away and not ducats."

"Silence, Verdiana, it is a sin to murmur against Providence ; I have knocked, and it was opened unto me ; I have asked, and one hundred ducats were given me."

"One hundred ducats ! Then we may make a bonfire."

The curate sighed ; went to supper ; ate little, drank less, and replied in broken sentences to the questioning of Verdiana, who standing by him kept inquiring :

"Are you not well, reverend sir ? Did any accident happen to you on the road ? Have you been frightened ? Blessed man, why don't you speak ? Do you want me to make you some water gruel with honey—or would you like a quince boiled in wine ? Shall I bathe your temples with vinegar ? Have a mustard poultice—a foot bath."

"Ouff !" cried the curate : "do all these things for yourself, Verdiana, if you need them ; I am very well, thank God, and here are the hundred ducats."

"Oh, how splendid ! They are not wrong in holding them tight who possess them !"

"Listen, Verdiana ; there are a hundred ducats ; but they are not enough by a good deal for the parsonage, the house furniture, and the church."

"Well, patience ! we will restore the church in the first place, and Jesus will provide for the rest."

"He will provide, certainly ; but remember, Verdiana, if we do not take care of the parsonage, one of these days we shall be obliged to swim in the house."

“It is better for us to swim in the house, than for Christ in the church.”

“Yes ; but if his minister is drowned, the divine service will be interrupted to the great detriment of his worshippers.”

“Poh ! In the first place the service will not be interrupted, for, as the proverb says, one pope dead another is made ; and although it is true that it rains into the house, still we do not swim in it, nor drown, that I know.”

“Yes ; but the wise Hippocrates says : *principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur* ; do you know what that means, Verdiana ? It means if we do not mend things in time the hole will become a ditch. Besides, a ragged dress causes the wearer to be despised. For the fault of a dirty servant, a master has sometimes become contemptible.”

“But it would be worse to hate the servant for the ingratitude he shows his master ; and think for a moment what a master.”

The Curate seemed as if laying on the grate of St. Lorenzo, and sighing, he thought : “how the deuce did Verdiana get so much wisdom all at once !” But Verdiana continued :

“I said the ducats were *splendid*, because indeed they pleased me ; but they are not more beautiful than conscience or duty, and much less beautiful than Jesus ; and see how I would use them, if they could make me believe that you would do wrong ?” and Verdiana took a handful of them, and made a sign of throwing them out of the window. “I would throw them as grain to chickens.”

“Verdiana ! Verdiana !” cried the curate, seizing her by the waist, and pushing her back, “are you mad ?”

How many and bitter were the words that Verdiana spoke, and how keenly they stung the curate, I will not say ; it is enough to know, that he bent down his head and inwardly prayed that the bitter cup—that is, Verdiana—might pass away from him ; he sighed, he repented, repeating the act of contrition ten times,



and deliberated to restore the money. Suddenly looking at them, he thought of Judas' thirty pieces of silver ; and, remembering the end of this traitor, looked shudderingly at the fig tree in the garden, and went away from the window ; but while giving himself up to despair, an idea came to his mind ; he felt as joyful as Archimedes, when he discovered the way to know if copper had been mixed in the crown of gold ; if he could have touched his cheeks, he would have kissed himself ; and raising his head, like a deer who, regaining his breath, continues his race, said :

“ Listen to me, Verdiana, you have talked much and badly, the Lord forgive you. Who taught you to think so badly of your neighbors—of a curate—of myself ? Does it seem, as long as you have lived with me, that I have been a man to deserve such reproofs ? And if I have not been, how could I all at once change from wine into vinegar ? Listen now. We must rob Peter to pay Paul. Giannicchio and I will collect the unbroken tiles on the roof of the parsonage, and put them on the roof of the church ; we will put new ones on the parsonage ; we will cut out six shirts somewhat long, and when needed for the church, we will add a strip of lace to one of them, and that will do for the robe ; from the damask quilt we will make two copes—one yellow, and the other dyed red ; the lamps and vases can be used both for church and house ; I will also have the crucifix repaired that hangs over my bed, and on festival days we will have it in the church.”

The good priest had reasoned thus :

“ The condition which I made was not to spend a ducat on the church. Cursed be the condition ! But if I remove the tiles from the parsonage, I will prevent the rain from leaking into the church, and then I keep my promise ; it is true, that in this way I shall have to make anew the roof of the parsonage ; but I can safely say, that I did not spend a cent for the Church.”

These subtle and false reasonings with which weak minds, although honest, are accustomed to capitulate with their own consciences, were contrary to the common sense of Verdiana, who said :

“ Of what use is it to make this choice, and this change ? What can you and Giannicchio do climbing upon the roofs like cats ? For what purpose is this story of shirts and church garments ? What partiality is this for mending the Crucifix over your bed, and leaving the one in the church with its arms hanging down ? What nonsense, what confusion, what deviltry is entering your head ? No, sir ; we must begin at the beginning—that is at the church, if there is any left, very well ; if not, patience. The ravens who brought bread in the desert to St. John will come also for us.”

“ Verdiana, since that time, it seems the ravens have given up the baker’s business.”

“ And as to dress, have you not read to me a thousand times that passage in the Gospel, which says : ‘ Why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field ; Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.’ ”

“ Yes, Verdiana, yes ; all this is true, it is in the Gospel ; but we must not take metaphors to the letter. The dress of the lilies is a particular dress of their own. Have you ever seen a priest clothed in a tunic like a lily, or a lily like a priest ?”

“ *Misericordia Domini !* is it really yourself, who speaks ? You seem changed into a Lutheran !”

“ Verdiana, I say !” exclaimed the curate, becoming impatient.

“ But the Evil one sometimes pounces upon religious people as he would at a village feast, however ”——

“ What are you going to do, Verdiana ?” asked the curate, seeing her take the vase of holy water, and putting the sprinkler into it.

“Your words sound heretical—this is not flower of your bag ; let me do it—one extra blessing spoils nothing ; if there should be anything—you understand—the devil must go out of you.”

The curate in vain cried : “Verdiana, stop ! Verdiana, say ! Don’t make me angry !”

The pitiless servant sprinkled him with holy water from head to foot. But the curate was less vexed than he seemed ; nay, in his heart he was glad of an opportunity to commune with himself, away from the logical persecution of Verdiana ; so with a cross tone he said :

“Come now, give me a light, for I am going to bed ;” and gathering together the money, with a vexed look, he went to his room.

Verdiana followed him silently, but not appeased.

The curate opened his desk, and threw the money in topsyturvy ; and with a manner that would have shamed Agamemnon when he commanded *Ægisthus*—

“Go, let not the next sun see thee in Argo !”

he said to the servant :

“Good night.”

Verdiana knew from the tone, that these words meant : “go away immediately.” She retired ; but could not help replying through the half closed door :

“Good night, reverend sir, good night ; but remember that the devil’s flour is lost in the chaff ; and mind lest the money of the devil does not spoil the money of God ; for truly the ducats you brought home smell of brimstone a mile off.”

The curate shut the door in her face, hastily undressed himself, and after he got into bed, began to think : “I should like to know who would blame me ! I do not fail in keeping my promise, for I do not spend a ducat of Cenci, in the church ; but no one can forbid my giving to the church what belongs to the

house. Perhaps it would have been better not to have meddled in this bad business, and to have refused the money decidedly. But no ; for if I had not accepted it, I could not pull down the house to mend the church. When the sheet is short, the head or the feet must go bare. Consequently I have done well—very well !”

Contented with his arguments, he turned on the other side. But, curious circumstance ! Here he found an entirely different opinion ; a voice, which seemed to come from his pillow, reproached him thus : “ Cheat, caviller, hypocrite, you want to serve half God and half Mammon ! No, either all to God, or all to Mammon ; there is no middle way. Are these the examples that the Prophet Elisha, and St. Peter have given you ? Your fate will be that of Simon the magician, who mounted into the air by virtue of the devil, and fell to the ground through the virtue of God, and broke his legs ; or perhaps that of Gehazi, who became white from head to foot with leprosy. A fine appearance you would make in the pulpit like Biagio the miller ! What would Verdiana say then ? Offerings presented with an impure heart are rejected by Heaven. Cain is one example, and you accepted the money with the express condition of not using it in God’s service. Is this not worse than simony ? He who does not worship God is already a servant of the Evil one. Get up—go to Verdiana, and ask her pardon ; this woman has so much charity that she can spare some for you. Get up, and go to Rome, even in your night-clothes, return the money to Count Cenci, and say to him : Leave me my poverty with my innocence ; for riches with sin do not please me.” “ Ouff ! how hot I am,” exclaimed the curate aloud ; “ I cannot get asleep ;” and he turned on the other side. Here his good genius awaited him, and whispered in his ears : “ Console yourself, for the intention justifies the work, and in this world he who is wise rules himself according to the winds and tides ; if Verdiana should again lec-

ture you, you can quote the example of the Hebrews, who, before they went out of Egypt, borrowed the gold and silver vessels of the Egyptians, and very likely used them in the building of the Tabernacle ; and you can also state the case of Jacob's children, who, in order to avenge themselves for their stolen sister, persuaded the Shechemites to exterminate—but no—such examples are not to be told to Verdiana ; I will state one more to the purpose. At any rate, the intention justifies the work ; if not in men's eyes, at least in God's. Then I have done right, very right !” And he went to sleep.

Some time after he was startled by an unusual noise ; he leaped into a sitting posture on the bed, and he thought he heard a light footfall on the floor ; supposing the cat had jumped down from some place, he stretched his hand out of the bed, and took one of his heavy iron-nailed shoes with the silver buckle, and threw it in the direction of the noise ; the shoe struck against a closet, which sounded like a drum, for it was empty. Verdiana, awakened by the noise, screamed out from her room near by :

“ Sir, reverend sir ! evil money is that which disturbs sleep, and God sends it in an evil day and an evil year ; when you was poorer you slept until morning ; now, you neither sleep yourself, nor let others.”

The curate hid his head under the sheets, and stopped his ears with the quilt, in order not to hear her persecuting voice.

Next morning the curate, whom we will call Don Cirillo, when he rose, looked first to the heavens, then glanced at Verdiana ; the former promised a fine, the latter a stormy day. He began in a low tone to sing the matutinal, and other hymns, and stirred about in order to provoke some friendly word ; but did not succeed. At breakfast, in order to break the ice, he began to ask, with indifference, the price of this thing or that, and then bravely, with a cunning that would have thrown into the shade the sharpest diplomatist, suddenly observed, that for so many things,



one hundred and fifty ducats did not seem enough. Verdiana, taken so by surprise on the subject of linens, in which every good housekeeper puts so much pride, forgetting what the money was for, began to calculate with Don Cirillo. The latter, although a learned man, was a very poor accountant, so the sum total never came right. Verdiana counted by touching her fingers to her lips, but she could not go far in arithmetic. The curate resolved then to take the money, and divide it into as many heaps as there were things to be purchased.

Don Cirillo had reason to congratulate himself on this stratagem, for he succeeded in appeasing the ill humor of Verdiana, and cheering up his own mind ; for the sight of money rejoices the eyes of man. He then, to execute his design, went to his room, followed by Verdiana, who said :

" You will see, by your calculation, a score or more will be wanting !"

" And I say, there will be enough;" and he bent down to raise the cover of his desk ; but, suddenly rising, he inquired :

" What the deuce did you say to me last night, Verdiana, about the devil's flour turning into chaff ?"

" I said so, because, in my youth, I was told by a priest, that the devil made a bargain with a country fellow to buy his soul for many thousand ducats ; having signed the paper, and paid the money, the countryman went home with his bag ; the next morning he was found dead in his bed, and the bag full of coal ; so he lost both his soul and money."

" Rest easy, Verdiana ; this money did not come from the devil, but from one of the noblest Roman gentlemen. Do you, however, persist in saying a score or more will be wanted ?"

" Yes ; a score, and a little over."

" Now we will see—I am pretty certain there will be enough." And he raised the lid—the money was gone.

Don Cirillo stood with his body bent, holding up the lid, his head turned towards Verdiana. Verdiana shut her eyes, and



put her hands to her head ; they both seemed seized by catalepsy. They stood a long time without uttering a word, without moving their eyes. A fearful commotion was raging in the breast of Don Cirillo while he was bending over the desk. In that warring of emotions, great was the grief for the loss of the money, great the wonder of how it disappeared, but greater, indeed, the remorse of having accepted it, with conditions surely not the best in the world. Don Cirillo, slowly rising, seemed to have lived ten years in a minute ; but without any bitterness, he said to his servant :

“ Verdiana, you were a prophetess.”

“ Oh, poor me ! I wish I had not said a word.”

“ And now, what is to be done ?” asked the curate, striking his forehead with his hand.

“ Resign yourself to God’s will.”

“ Woman, you have said wisely. However, Verdiana, mark well, the devil has nothing at all to do with this business. The dirty foot tracks through the house, the window which looks on the garden broken, and the noise that woke me last night, are clear proofs that some thief of the neighborhood has robbed us. God forgive him, and may the money do him more good than me.”

But, alas ! how the grief of these unfortunate creatures reached its utmost limit when, on descending to the stable, Marco also could not be found ! With what tears, what exclamations, did the parsonage resound ? Marco, they called with the sweetest voice ; Marco they invoked ; Marco, with burning prayers and suppliant vows, they begged of Heaven ; and the neighboring hills reëchoed with—“ Marco ! Marco !”

Even Giannicchio joined the tearful chorus, who tried to console their great grief, by putting on his neck the halter of the ass, and standing near the manger where Marco was always to be found, said :

“Do not cry, Don Cirillo ; Verdiana, wipe your eyes. I will take Marco’s place ; I will serve you like Marco. And when you wish to go to Rome, reverend sir, I will carry you on my shoulders as comfortably as Marco.”

A deep silence followed their outburst of grief ; nor did it seem that the consolations of Giannicchio comforted either of them. They could not eat ; Verdiana did not omit to prepare the dinner ; but the curate, seated at table, could not help turning his face occasionally to hide the tears that, in spite of him, would fill his eyes. He would stare at the dish without touching the viands ; or if he attempted to take a morsel on his fork, in carrying it to his mouth, he would let it fall with a heavy sigh, and put away the untouched dish. Ah ! it is bitter to swallow bread moistened with tears ! Don Cirillo rose, went down stairs, and seated himself upon the low wall on the right of the door of the house ; and to employ his hands, began to trace lines upon the ground. These, any one could clearly see, were merely mechanical movements, and that his mind was a thousand miles away ; but whether his mind dwelt on no particular object, or that his hands followed freely the motions his mind impressed, the fact is, that the curate would trace upon the sand the head of Marco. Verdiana, on the little low wall on the left, looked at her chickens ; she only looked—for, with her hands in her apron, she did not seem to hear their united petition, demanding their usual nourishment of grain. Giannicchio, over by the barn, wept, and gave vent to his feelings on the bread, giving it such bites as to make one fear for the hay, in case the bread should not be enough.

The thoughts of the priest, after wandering in different regions, finally rested upon Job : first of all he considered he had no wife, and this seemed a great cause for consolation ; then he expected no friends, for if only one of Job’s comforters, either the Temanite or Shuhite had come to comfort him, he

would in despair have thrown himself into the well ; and at last, his conscience being clear from any passion, and reasoning calmly and without prevarication, showed him he had committed a heavy sin against God, and that he should thank Him with all his heart for punishing him only with this slight trial ; and so he rose with his face sadly calm in its humiliation, which analyzed into its proper element, consisted of one part remorse for the ill-accepted money, another the shame of the scandalous words with Verdiana, and more than half, grief for the loss of Marco.

“ God gave,” sighed Don Cirillo, “ and God has taken away ; may His will be done : for the sin which I committed, thy hand, O Lord, punishes me lightly.”

Hardly had he finished uttering these words, than, as if Divine Justice being appeased, wished again to open her founts of mercy, the hills and vales resounded with a glorious and triumphant braying, which seemed—oh, great joy ! and really was Marco's. Nor had they time to say, “ that is Marco,” when he appeared crowned with green leaves ; and leaping, as he was wont, the hedge, he darted like a swift arrow towards the curate. “ How crowned ?” my reader will say ; “ these are fancies of a romancer.” Yes, crowned ; and why and how shall be told by and by. Meanwhile, my dear reader, look with me on Marco crowned ; not with laurel, for of this plant Petrarch says :

——raro se ne coglie  
Per coronare o Cesare o Poeta,  
Colpa e vergogna delle umane voglie ;

but with leaves of a different kind, arbustus and oak.

Scarcely had Marco appeared with his crown, than “ the embraces, the kissings, the pattings, the smiles, the tears of love, and broken and confused sentences,” were maddening to look at. Marco himself appeared moved like the others ; I will not say he wept or smiled (although, on the authority of grave

writers, I could affirm even this), but he signified his internal emotions by a powerful voice, surpassing every other. Marco was the Lablache of this choir. Don Cirillo relieved him of his saddle and bags, without noticing whether they were empty or full. Giannicchio first of all embraced and kissed him; then combed and washed him, cleaning his tail of the briars. Verdiana prepared fresh straw and grass; nay, turning her eyes about the garden, she saw one large cabbage, which looked like a senator; she reflected whether it were best to keep this for the curate's soup, or give it to Marco; but love for the latter conquered, and she resolutely plucked it, and mashing and chopping it, she put it into Marco's manger. It was the return of the prodigal son, and she killed the fatted calf. This day the ass had converted into an Easter.

It may also be added that, for an ass, Marco had on this festive occasion the same honors as Pope Boniface VIII. at his coronation banquet; for, as he was waited upon by two kings, the Hungarian and the Sicilian, in royal garments and crowns on their heads, so also the curate and Verdiana waited upon Marco. It is true, the curate had not on his cope, but in compensation Giannicchio acted as cup-bearer, and led him to the trough where once he had drunk the moon. Satiated, but not tired of eating, Marco felt the need of repose; he did not actually say "good night" to any one; but he let it be understood by stretching himself on the straw, shutting his eyes, and hanging his head down. On leaving the stable the curate took up the bags, and this time not being excited, noticed they were heavy, and put his hand in one. Worldly powers! Was he dreaming, or was he awake? He touched money; he overturned them on the ground—ducats! ducats! and what a number! Don Cirillo and Verdiana sat themselves on the ground, and making a pile of the money, it seemed as if there was four or five times the former amount. Gold, silver, and enough to

make a sane man crazy : counted and re-counted, they concluded there must be four or five hundred ducats.

"It seems to me, now, this money may be enough for every thing," said Don Cirillo, but Verdiana warningly answered :

"Is this money ours ? Let us be careful, reverend sir. God may have sent it to try us a second time."

"Verdiana, at first I thought as you, but now I am persuaded this money belongs to the thief ; he cannot be of the neighborhood, but one of the bandits that infest the country ; so that to give it back to him would be a sin, and to the once robbed, impossible. I propose," and he said it with some hesitation, "that we spend for ourselves about a hundred and fifty ducats, the remainder for the church and the poor of the parish, and both crucifixes shall be restored, the one in the church, and the other in the parsonage.

The proposal seemed to please Verdiana, for she added without objection :

"We can leave the damask quilt upon the bed, and buy the copes of new damask."

"We need not change the shirts into church-garments."

"The tiles on the parsonage can remain, and those on the church also."

"It is right ; to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, to God what is God's."

"Yesterday you did not think so."

"Let us say no more about it. Come, God has forgiven ; would you keep the bitter feeling ? Would you be less merciful than God, Verdiana ?"

"May the holy Virgin forbid ! You shall have two new tunics—one for summer, of camlet, the other for winter, of woollen cloth—and two new pairs of pantaloons—for yesterday, it seemed to me, eh—those you had were not in the best order."

"And two new gowns for you—one of cotton, the other of wool."



"And dishes."

"And napkins."

"Dishes are really necessary. Now that I can tell it without worrying you, you must know that for some time you have always eaten out of the same dish ; when I went into the kitchen I washed it in a hurry, replacing it on the table so you might not notice it."

"And with napkins we can let the cat's fur rest."

"Oh, Lord ! how poor we are. I never noticed it before as now, having money to spend, I think of the many things that are wanted."

"So it is ; money is like the sun ; it discovers poverty, and cheers it."

"But we have thought too much of ourselves."

"Giannicchio, for the first time in his life, shall have a coat made of one piece of cloth."

"And Marco a new bridle."

"By the way, what a good beast Marco is ! and you, Verdiana, are a blessed Christian, both of you give me a chance to do a pious work. Verdiana, the poor washerwoman has lost her donkey, and is very sad, not knowing what to do about it. She cannot go to Rome after her clothes, and her boys cannot gain their living with the cart. Now then, give me a score of ducats. I will go without loss of time to console her, and at the same time I will bring her sons and dog here with me, that they may keep watch here to-night. You see, Verdiana, if the robber came for my money, so much more eager he will be to return for mine and his also ; and he may as well know that there blows no good wind here for him."

And the good curate did as he said ; nor was he wrong in being well prepared, for the next night the dog barked and growled continually ; afterwards he ceased.

Marco grew old ; neither did the curate or Verdiana, as may



be supposed, grow young. One day the curate, after supper, raised his hand, as he was accustomed to do when he wished to bespeak attention. Verdiana crossed her arms upon her breast to listen attentively. Giannicchio stood still in the middle of the room with a dish in his hand, which he was carrying into the kitchen, turning his head towards the curate in order not to lose his words. Don Cirillo began :

“ Our most ancient ancestors ”——

“ How many years ago ?”

“ More than several thousand—but don’t interrupt me, Giannicchio—sent some wise and learned men to Greece to learn the laws with which they ruled, which fame had described as very just and religious, in order to rule with equal rectitude our own country ”——

“ But does not Greece belong to the Turks ?”

“ Do not interrupt me, Verdiana—in those days Turks were not known—don’t you understand that I am speaking of the time when Virginus killed his daughter *honestatis causa* ? The Greeks, then, as they instructed our forefathers in their wise laws, likewise gave us a most humane example of the manner in which our ancient companion Marco should be treated. The Athenians, after having built a magnificent temple, called *Hecatompdon*, to Minerva, who was, so to say, a saint in those times ”——

“ Well, now, what have they done with that saint.”

“ Giannicchio, do not interrupt me. The Greeks freed from labor the asses and mules that worked in the building, and declared them lords and masters, to wander and feed where they pleased ; and it is also recorded in a certain book, that one of these asses lived to be eighty years old ”——

“ Nearly as old as we are.”

“ What a bad defect you have. But, Verdiana, do not ”——

“ It might have been a miracle of St. Minerva.”

"Giannicchio, do not interrupt. Minerva could not work miracles, for now she would be, so to say, a devil."

"How a devil? Have they not even got at Rome a St. Mary *della Minerva*? Can she be then, as you say, a St. Mary of the devil?"

"Do, Verdiana, let me speak, for the love of Heaven; this I will explain at a proper time."

"Then make haste."

"*Omnia tempus habent*, my dear: every fruit has its season."

"Yes; but remember we are as old as the donkey of Athens."

Don Cirillo, to be rid of this continual interruption, an evil already become incurable in his house, hastened on, saying:

"For which considerations and examples I propose we free Marco, paying his expenses as a good and faithful servant while it pleases God to let him stay among us."

But Verdiana opposed.

"Hear me, Don Cirillo. I do not read printed books like you, but I reason thus: we are also old, still, thank God, not hurt in any limb or faculty of our bodies; hence, as long as Providence keeps us sound, she intends that according to our capabilities we should do something. When we shall go to sleep in the churchyard, reverend sir, we shall have plenty of time to rest. I differ from your opinion in this, that Marco being old should labor in work suited to the old; he need no longer carry stones, bricks, or cement, nor the doctor, who is heavier than all these; but he will be strong enough to carry grass to Rome, and come back loaded with some little thing we may want. This will keep him healthy, and be more agreeable to us; for seeing him only lazily fatten himself on grass, who knows but he may fall into our disgrace like a good-for-nothing fellow eating his bread uselessly."

“Verdiana, you are a true descendant of the Cumæan Sybil.”

How it happened that the ass returned, and the money was increased, those who will be kind enough to read the following chapter may ascertain.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### TREACHERY.

Polchè si vide il traditore uscire  
Quel che avea prima immaginato invano,  
O da se torlo, o di parlo morire  
Nuovo argomento immaginosi, e strano.

ARIOSTO.

It was a late hour of the night, and Count Cenci had retired to his study, and was reading with great attention Aristotle's book upon the nature of animals ; now and then he would pause as if thinking, and note upon the margin the thoughts that entered his mind. Suddenly the clock struck two ; it sounded in the air like a haughty question. It seemed to ask : " Who dares to watch in this hour of death ?"

" I watch," replied Count Cenci, " but without profit. The mysteries of nature are sought in vain. Study, read, meditate, you are fortunate if you can again find the door by which you entered. I hold him, who divided time into hours, minutes, and seconds, the worst genius the world ever produced. I can well understand that a man travelling from Rome to Naples may put his head out of the carriage window to read upon the mile stones how much he has shortened his journey ; but when the city which we are approaching is Necropolis, the church-yard, oh ! let him go to the devil who says : " we are nearly there, this is the last mile !" These hours once struck, when they are gone sound to us like the noise of a fallen fragment of life, which has dropped from our shoulders never to return. Perhaps in youth, when the

little bells that folly tinkles in our ears, or the other hum of invitation which lascivious mouths whisper within, this evil sound either never reaches us, or is feebly heard. But at the age to which I have come, it seems as if the hours escape more swiftly—like riders who ply harder the lash, at the last round of the race : *motus in fine velocior*. Now then one must attend with all one's mind—attend to what ? Everything is in contrast, disorder and confusion in the world : we are at war with ourselves. I, who in my earliest youth embraced a certain course of life, and have since confirmed my choice by reflection, and invariably adopted it in my actions—I, when I least expect it, feel within a spirit which disagrees, contradicts and overpowers ; which, either by flattery or force, tries to drag me where I do not care to go : if it were a rebellious eye, or hand, I could tear it out, or cut it off ; but how can I lay my hands upon this rebellious spirit ? If I cannot stifle it, I may at least conquer it. Oh, rebellious spirit, why do you seek to hold back the torrent of my will with your web-like banks ? If you are an angel, hear me : return to your home, for you would preach to a desert ; if a devil, go ; do not trouble me now ; we can settle all our accounts at another time. Beatrice thought to terrify me when she menaced that posterity would say of me : ‘ In the time of the prophet Nathan the scourges of God were three, afterwards they became four : famine, pestilence, war, and Count Cenci.’ Never fell flatteries from the gilded tongue of a courtier on a more gratified ear ! Would it were so ! But posterity will not even know I have lived. Everything is old, consumed ; everything falls to ruin here below. Our terrible forefathers have devoured everything ; they have even disinherited us from becoming infamous. O ! Tiberius—O ! Nero—O ! Domitian, you have taken from us the right of being called wicked. You plunged your lips in the rivers of lust and ferocity, until only a few drops remain for us to quench our thirst. Still I feel a heart and mind to outdo

them ; and if fortune had only given me an empire, or the Pontifical seat, I would have so reaped in your fields, most august emperors, as not to envy you the harvest. Art may supply, and even surpass power : there are diamonds, although small, that surpass by the purity of their lustre gems of larger size. Gallop on, Sin ; the way which remains is short—carry me to perdition at full speed.”

A hasty knocking at the secret door put an end to his wicked reflections. Supposing it was Marzio, who had come on account of some unlooked for accident, he quickly opened it. Olimpio panting, his head bound with a bloody handkerchief, burst into the room, turning his head backward like a man who suspects he is pursued ; he threw himself on a seat wiping with his arm the perspiration from his forehead. Count Cenci, although very expert in dissimulating, could ill suppress his surprise and spite on seeing him ; yet, feigning as well as he could, asked :

“ What devil brings you here in this dress at this hour ? you are wounded too ; what accident has happened ? ”

“ Betrayed ! Count Cenci, betrayed ; but I swear to God and the apostles Peter and Paul, that before I die, I will kill the miserable Judas, the Traitor, even were he mine own father.”

“ Betrayed ! how can that be ? But you are dropping blood ! ”

“ Don’t mind it ; it is nothing, a mere pistol shot—the ball only grazed my head, nothing more.”

“ Very well ; now, Olimpio, sit comfortably, and tell me all that has happened to you.”

“ To-night was the one appointed for the undertaking of his Excellency the Duke of Altemps, from which a voice within tried to dissuade me, and had it not been for that cursed ass, I had decided to try whether, by using all my power, I might not succeed in again becoming an honest man, and just then, at the best moment, the bucket has fallen again into the well. The ass stands between me and heaven.”



“Olimpio, you have been hurt on the head ; you are raving, poor man !”

“*Per Dio !* I am not raving, Count Cenci ; I am telling the truth. I had finished the carpenter’s business, but with an addition to it that neither you nor I expected ; it was the devil himself that made the unfortunate carpenter burn to death.”

“Certainly it was the devil who bolted the door on the outside.”

“I did that ; but I swear to you as an honest bandit, that I only meant to prevent him from running immediately out of the house, awaking the neighborhood to help him in extinguishing the flames ; I did not suppose your combustible preparation burned so terribly ; nor could I foresee that the carpenter would get confused and wander all over the burning house before opening the window. In short, I did not suppose, oh ! I would not have believed, so much trouble would come of it. Did you hear, Count Cenci, the daring of your daughter-in-law, Lady Luisa ? What a difference between us and her ! True Latin blood !”

“This I also know. Certainly she is a courageous woman. Did I say courageous ? Yes, and I will not retract my word ; every creature has its virtues ; and if I were not Francesco Cenci, I should wish to be Luisa Cenci ; in our family the women are far superior to the men. If my sons had only resembled Olimpia, Beatrice, or Luisa ; if this evil age had given me a chance to acquire fame by honest deeds, either by the hand or with the mind, perhaps then—who knows ?—I might have taken a fancy to another path ; but now, let us think no more about it.”

“For me, it seemed as if my heart would break ; I felt all my wicked nature falling away, and I cried, cried like a child. For the first time I thought of my mother, who used to hide me under her gown, and receive herself the beating that my father wished to give me ; I thought of poor Clelia, when she used to wait for me at the fountain ; I thought of the innkeeper of Zagarolo, who keeps such cool wine in summer : of the rope of

Master Alessandro, so enamored of my neck ; and not one of these recollections moved me so much as the courageous Lady Luisa Cenci. I was deliberating upon changing my life, and I should not have hesitated ; but in wanting to accomplish everything first, I spoiled all. I had done so much evil in the world, that it was necessary to atone for it with some little good ; but the evil I could do alone ; I could not do the good. I thought of getting the hundred and fifty ducats of the curate in order to have masses said for the soul of the carpenter and all whom I have killed, whom I trust in God are not on my account in a worse place than purgatory, and also to provide in some way for the poor widow ; nor did I think it a sin to steal them, because, as you said, you had only given them to him for a joke ; and as for what the curate may have had himself, it is a well-known thing that the accessory follows the principal. I dressed myself like a beggar, examined the premises diligently, and at night slipped quietly into the house, and took the money. In going away I went into a closet ; the curate awoke, mistook me for the cat, and threw a shoe at me, which sounded like a bomb-shell ; but he did not hit me. I had observed the worthy curate owned a young strong ass, and I intended to borrow it, to ease me of walking. I went to the stable, unfastened him from his manger, put the saddle on him, he standing quiet ; led him into the open air, he quite docile ; but when he saw I wanted to ride him, he began to kick, enough to break a mountain of iron. 'Ah ! you want a fight ! and you shall have it,' said I. He kicked, and I kicked ; he bit, and I whipped him until he was raw : finally, he bent back his ears, and sighing asked for a truce. Pardon to the conquered, provided they let themselves be ridden. I mounted him, and we started as good friends, as if we never had quarrelled. At dawn I saw the bags hanging from the saddle ; and as the money I carried about me was rather heavy, I put the curate's money and my own within them, which in gold

and silver amounted to about four hundred ducats, and more. Day coming on, I went into a wood, intending to reach Rome about dark ; I thought that now I might trust the ass—oh, yes ! trust yourself to an ass !—therefore I let him go leisurely at his pleasure, little caring whether he ate the leaves of the trees or fed on the grass. We at last reached a rivulet, rather full of water on account of a dam to turn the mill. The ass plunged into it, I drew up my legs not to get wet ; all at once the ground gave way under us, the ass disappeared, and I found myself in the water up to my waist. This unlooked for accident, the chill which ran over me, and more than all, the thoughts which had occupied my mind, made me unable at that moment to take a course that might have helped me. Feeling the saddle under my feet, I jumped on it, and then gave a leap, which brought me upon the opposite bank. The cursed ass fell on purpose to be rid of me, and as soon as he felt relieved of his load, turned back, and ran off like a deer. Ah ! the deceitful beast ! the thief !—I forded the brook, and ran after him ; but could not catch him ; he seemed Bayard flying from Rinaldo—he leaped over bushes, broke through hedges, scattered stumps and stones ; so that I thought, and think now, the devil had got into him. The following night, imagining the ass had returned to his home, I tried again to get into the curate's house ; but it was watched by dogs and peasants. And now—I said to myself—instead of gaining I have lost, and have not a penny left to do either good or bad ; and I found myself, as it were, with a knife at my throat, dragged into the enterprise of my lord Duke. On one side it only appeared to me as a little trick—to abduct a girl !—Lord, they like to be stolen ! And besides, these matters are soon arranged ; the Duke seemed to be very much in love with her. Who knows but he may finally marry her, and one day she may thank me for it ? On the other side, how can I benefit others without money ? With the exception of this affair, I could

recall no way of procuring it. Some have been ruined for women, some for estates and titles, some for money : it was the fate of Olimpio to go to perdition for an ass !”

The Count looked intently at him, imagining from the playfulness of the story, that Olimpio spoke in fun, but his appearance was so serious that he easily saw he was in earnest. Olimpio went on :

“ There was no help for it ; I went to the Duke to arrange matters. I had studied the house, the locality, the habits of the household ; four companions, I making a fifth, went. The Duke waited in the street with his carriage. I entered the court-yard, said to the porter : ‘ My dear fellow, please call Lucrezia, and tell her to come down, for Gioacchino is here with a message from her mother—and here is a shilling for your trouble.’ The porter went, and my companions entered the yard quickly, hiding behind the columns of the portico. The girl came down immediately, singing like a nightingale ; in less time than I can tell it, we wrapped her in a cloak, and carried her to the Duke’s carriage, who received her with open arms. I ordered the horses to start, and we followed behind ; we went slowly, in order not to arouse suspicion, and met not a living soul. ‘ Everything goes on as if by enchantment,’ said one of my companions in a low tone. As for me, accustomed to such business, it seemed too good ; and I was not deceived ; for on turning the corner of a street, the police came upon us. The others got frightened. I, not fearing, cried : ‘ Turn driver, and then run for life.’ Damnation ! A storm of police rushed down on this side also. ‘ Boys, Master Alessandro has spread his net, if we don’t want to be worsted, we must break it—out knives.’ So said and done. The Duke himself descended from his carriage and bravely drew his sword. I did not think him so brave—never trust to still waters ! But the police did not wait for us to approach, but sent us, from a distance, a discharge of musketry. Who fell,

and who remained standing ? I could not think of the others, and the darkness was terrific. The little hussey, pulling the handkerchief from her mouth, hung out of the carriage window, crying : ' Help ! ' and ' Murder ! ' as if we were going to kill her. The posse of police called out : ' Kill them ! kill them ! ' and I backed against a wall, giving blows which gave no time for a sigh. At last I cleared my way, and ran as fast as my legs could carry me. I hardly touched the ground with my feet, for you know, he who runs, runs ; but he who flees, flies ; and besides, two policemen, certainly two dismissed valets, ran after me like hounds ; the breathing of these fellows lifted the hair on the back of my head ; they almost touched my clothes with their hands. I turned a corner, still running ; I turned another and another ; my breath began to grow faint ; but they grew tired also, one more than the other, for their steps sounded no longer equal. Then I remembered the story of Horatius, the valiant Paladin ; and thinking they had gone with me as far as was right, I stopped, turned suddenly round to say farewell to the one who stood nearest to me, with a pistol shot in his heart. This fellow whirled about three or four times, like a dog running after his own tail, then fell to the ground. The other fellow understood that I meant to take leave of them, so, in his turn, before separating, paid a salute with an ounce of lead, which grazed my head above the left ear. Notwithstanding this, I did not stop running ; after a grand race I paused awhile to speculate where I might be, and found myself, by chance, near your house. To return by the same road I should be lost, for though at such a distance, I could hear the noise of the people who had collected like the waters of the Tiber under the arches of the St. Angelo's bridge. I resolved to profit by the opportunity which fortune had advisedly put in my way ; I climbed the garden wall, and groping about, I have at last come upon you, following the same path that Marzio led me. Now, Sir Count, hide me until



to-morrow evening ; for, with God's help, I intend to go back to the woods."

Cenci, who had listened attentively, asked :

" You are really sure no one saw you enter here ?"

" No one. But you understand, the police being on the look-out, it is better to avoid them on the first heat ; and, besides, here in Rome, I breathe a gallows air, which takes the skin from my throat—it really does not agree with me."

" You can assure me that no one knew you ?"

" No one—no one. Besides, don't you see, I am disguised as a gentleman ?"

In fact, Olimpio had changed his usual dress.

" Cheer up then ; if it is as you say there is no danger. But we must act cautiously ; the servants must not see you ; I cannot trust them at all ; they always have their eyes and ears open ; we are surrounded by spies ; they love their master as the wolf does the lamb—to eat his flesh."

" Do you not even trust Marzio ?"

" ' Before breaking he was whole '—says the proverb. So, so ; but I have sent him into the country on business. You must remain hidden (and mind, more on your account than mine) a little while in the vaults of the palace."

" In the vaults ?"

" Vaults—that is, the cellars ; you will find yourself among honorable and agreeable companions—the wine casks. I give you leave to broach them, and drink oblivion to your troubles, as long as you please ; on one condition, however, that after having drunk, you will replace the spigot."

" As I can get nothing better, I accept the room for the sake of the company."

" You will not live there like a prince, nor even like a bandit. You will find an abundance of straw ; in less than half an hour I will bring you something to eat, a light, and a kind of



ointment that will relieve the pain of your wounds. May I die an evil death, if in a short time you feel any more pain. Be comforted ; all undertakings are not successful ; not fortune, but constancy succeeds in everything. The Romans, after the defeat of Cannæ, sold the ground occupied by the Carthaginian army, and at last took Carthage. Give me your arm—go softly, eh !—look out—go slowly.”

And through the dark he led him through many windings to the cellars of the palace.

“ Here, the devil himself could not find me.”

“ Oh, be sure of that, no one can find you !”

“ Besides, no one knows I am here.”

“ Or ever will know it.”

“ It is enough for me, if the police don’t find it out till the day after to-morrow—then I care nothing at all about it.”

“ Stoop down—be careful not to knock your head upon the threshold—here—this way—go in.”

“ Go in,” said Olimpio, withdrawing his foot, while the cool, damp air blew in his face. Count Cenci smilingly asked :

“ What is the matter, are you afraid ?”

“ I ? No ! I am thinking that when we enter a dark place, we always know it ; but we never know when we shall go out.”

“ When ? why to-morrow night, you said.”

“ If you should not come for me ?”

“ How would your death profit me ? Where could I find another Olimpio to serve me with poison and knives ?”

“ But if you should not come ?”

“ You could halloo. These cellars are near the street, and the passers-by would hear you.”

“ A good exchange ! To be carried from the Cenci cellars to the prison of Corte Savella.”

“ Remember, that I should be obliged to go to the castle for having harbored such an old rogue as you are.”

"I find some truth in what you say ; at any rate, leave the door open."

He went in ; but the door swung on its hinges, and shut tight.

"Count Cenci, how came the door to shut ?"

"I hit against it."

"Bring a light soon, and open the door."

"I will go for the key, and return."

"Mind, don't forget the light."

"Light ! Oh you will want no light, if the saying is true, *et lux perpetua luceat eis* ;" hummed Cenci in the tone of a requiem, retiring hastily.

"It seems incredible !" he added, after retiring to his room, "these fellows boast of having a sharp wit ! What fox ever used greater cunning to escape the trap, than this bandit ? Wait for me, Olimpio ; you may have to wait a long time ; for unless the Archangel does not take a fancy to open to you on the day of judgment, I certainly shall not. You will imitate in your death the Roman epicurean, Pomponius Atticus, the elegant friend of Cicero. There must be a certain pleasure hidden in death by starvation ; since he, elevated by fasting, desired to continue it until death ; not wishing, after he had travelled so far in the way to go out of this world, to retrace his steps, and turn back. If he had not come in upon me so unexpectedly, I should have put Olimpio in a place where I might have watched the effects of this death. Patience ! it may do for another occasion, God willing. Now I throw myself into Fortune's hands, for after mature deliberation, a grain of fortune is better than a bushel of wisdom. In war, in love, in business, in the arts themselves, fortune rules absolute. I had woven this plot with threads of wisdom, and fortune has broken it, as a shark the net ; and now with her own hands brings him into my power, as a mild reproof for having distrusted her : and I should have remem-

bered Arona, when Capt. Rense undermined the walls, which through Fortune's means were blown up into the air, and then came back fixed upon their old foundations as if they had never been touched. We will sacrifice, then, a calf to Fortune, and a lamb to Wisdom. Farewell, Olimpio, good night. My salute is not so noisy as the policeman's ; mine is calmer, but more sure. Sleep in peace, Olimpio ; I am also sleepy : I wish you a sleep like an innocent man's—one like mine."

Of the four companions of Olimpio, three were killed on the spot ; the fourth, badly wounded, died on his way to the hospital. The Duke was wounded in his right arm, but he recovered. After a long trial, in which he confessed every particular of the event, being silent only upon that in which Count Cenci was concerned, the Pope was in doubt whether to condemn him to the gallows, or the galleys. The powerful influence which the Duke had at court, and more than all, the money profusely spent among the familiars of the palace, disposed the Pope to consider the Duke's youth, his previous unblemished life ; the cause which induced him to do evil, which, though bad, was not execrable ; and, besides, the crime was not accomplished ; for all which reasons his punishment was commuted. What this commutation was I find stated, not without surprise, in the pleadings of the lawyer Prospero Farinaccio, who defended him. He was sent to Avignon—as governor for the Pope !

As strange things are hard to believe, if the reasons that make them common and natural are not manifest, so the writings of that time relate how Pope Clement was induced to adopt this method by his great avarice, for he assigned no pay to the Duke ; but at the same time overwhelmed him with so many expenses, besides that of keeping the office with the splendor due to a Roman gentleman, that on this account, and because of the money spent to free him from punishment, the very noble house of Altemps suffered such a loss, that time has never been able to raise it again.

## CHAPTER XIV.

MONSIGNORE GUIDO GUERRA.

. . . . . Quello amico  
Non chiama. Invoca un Dio, che l'abbandona  
E la condanna a disperarsi. È desta,  
E delira. ANROSSI, *Beatrice Cenci*.

BEATRICE, with pale face, clad in white, a lamp in her hand, resembled one of Eloisa's vestals, who went at night under the vaults of Paraclete to weep upon the tomb of her buried friend. She touched the ground with light, hasty steps, like those of Happiness in the dwellings of Adam's children.

She put down her light, carefully opened a door, looked suspiciously around, and rushed into the garden.

Where is Beatrice Cenci, the bold girl, going at this late hour? To enjoy, perhaps, the splendor of the heavens, where God has written His glory in letters of stars? The heavens are hidden in black clouds, and the air resounds with the roaring of the coming storm. She goes perhaps not to lose any of the sweet notes with which the nightingale fills the silence of the night? But thunder is rumbling in the sky, and the birds are all hidden beneath the forest leaves. Has she a desire to listen to the murmuring of the water, which by night sounds like a secret wailing over the miseries of mankind—only happy now, when in the arms of Sleep—brother of Death? But the waters, lashed by the scourge of the winds, ripple like snakes upon Medusa's head. The smile of spring, which is the soul of flowers, has gone to rejoice that part of the world where the young year in-

vites it. Autumn scatters, with its first chilly breath, his yellow withered leaves—like an avaricious old man, who, upon his death-bed, generous when too late, divides his inheritance among his relatives, who run at the odor of the grave—like greedy wild beasts, growling as they devour.

She comes, alas ! in search of a star, which may guide her through a darkness more obscure than this night's. She comes to look for a flower fallen from the heavenly gardens upon the human soul—hope. A flower often withered upon its stalk, before, from its open leaves, it can send any fragrance—a flower too often gnawed by the worm upon its stem, so that when plucked, its leaves fall at the mercy of the winds, displaying upon its bare head a drop of worthless dew—a bitter tear. Why should I conceal it any longer ? Count Cenci's daughter goes to meet a trustful lover.

And how, and when did she fall in love ? How did love take root in this desolate soul ? Upon a rock of granite, unknown to human tread, where the sea bird sometimes stops to rest his weary wings, I have seen the violet gently and sweetly wave in the moaning breeze. Who carried there that handful of earth, from which the modest flower derives its life ? Providence, whose will has never created a desert without a fountain, an Alp without a flower, or misfortune without consolation.

And her lover was worthy of her. Monsignore Guido Guerra, as the history of the times relates, was born of an illustrious house, tall, handsome, and of noble bearing ; and, like Beatrice, of light complexion and blue eyes. The customs of the time—I cannot say if they were more lax or less hypocritical than ours—were not outraged by prelates fond of arms and love. Often did the great dignitaries of the Church take off their clerical robes ; scaled the walls where their loves dwelt ; wore cloaks and swords ; often fought in battles ; and very often gave and received sword thrusts. The councils did not approve, and had



from a remote period reproved these practices ; but custom was above councils. The Coadjutor of the Archbishop of Paris, de Gondi, who was afterwards Cardinal de Retz, went in the darkness disguised as a knight to visit Anne of Austria, regent of France, and in the daytime appeared at court with a dagger under his surplice ; and for that reason this weapon was afterwards nicknamed the *breviary* of Monsignore Coadjutor.

Beatrice, so modest a girl, would certainly have repulsed any love which was not really worthy ; and we know, that although Monsignore Guerra was dressed in priestly robes, he was not bound to the Church by any vow or sacred orders : and by leaving off the dress, could marry whomsoever he chose. He was very wealthy, and the only child of a widowed mother. History also says he was gifted with fine talents ; skillful in any work which he undertook, cultivator of the fine arts, and so fortunate, that he never planned anything, which he did not succeed in accomplishing. Fortune seemed to lavish upon him at two separate times, all the good and the evil which she could, and which she usually scatters over the heads of other men with numberless changes. Lady Lucrezia knew this love and favored it all she could, for the great pity which she felt towards the girl, whom she wished to save from the infamously fierce persecution of her father, and to see her happy.

During the short intervals when Count Cenci was away from home, or from Rome, Guido, warned of it by trusty servants, would go to the palace, and would console the ladies as well as he could. Although he was pledged to Beatrice, he still enjoyed the favor of the Pope, and knowing him to be of severe temperament, and desirous that he should not leave the ecclesiastical state, where he had been promised great promotion, he delayed from day to day the opportunity of revealing his intention to the Pontiff, and receiving his consent, without making him an enemy. But Count Cenci, informed by his spies of Monsignore Guerra's



designs, or perhaps he suspected them only, warned him to cease from visiting his family, and give up any intentions he might have in regard to Beatrice, if his life were dear to him. The name of Count Cenci would have dissuaded even the boldest from getting into any quarrel with him, and whoever was at enmity with him never considered himself safe, even in his own bed ; it is to be supposed, however, that Monsignore Guerra would have scorned his threats, if the reputation of his lady, which is held dear to every ardent lover, had not withheld him from causing any scandal ; therefore he saw her but seldom, the ill-starred lovers giving vent to their wishes in letters, which, as Pope tells us,

"May waft a sigh from Indus to the pole."

Who of my readers has not, at least once in his life, received such letters ? Do you remember how you received and opened them, trembling ; and how, impatient of delay, you attempted to read them by the uncertain twilight, or by the feeble rays of the young moon ? Do you remember how your temples beat, your ears tingled, and how your eyes sparkled ? Do you remember that you read them in a twinkling, and then reading them again slowly, word by word, understood, in a longer space of time, that which you had comprehended at a glance before ? Kissing and re-kissing them, you would replace them in your bosom, a sulphurous remedy to your burning passion ; as the Spartan youth hid the fox in his breast.

To this state the lovers were reduced, when, one evening, Monsignore Guerra, disguised, passed beneath the window of the palace. He looked up as he walked, to see if there were a light in the room of Beatrice, which was more desired by him than a light-house by sailors on a stormy night. As he drew near the arch whence, by stone steps, one can reach the Church of St. Thomas, he was knocked one side by a man who was running.

He almost fell ; but regaining his feet, seized the fellow by the neck, threatening him with an angry voice. The other, as soon as he recognized him, said :

“ Hist ! for God’s sake ! Take this letter ; it comes from Lady Beatrice ;” and shaking himself from him, fled.

Guido, heedless in his impatience, looked about for a light, to free himself from his anxiety. At the foot of the arch, at the end of the steps, he perceived a light burning before the image of the Madonna. Without another thought, he went there, opened the letter, and could hardly recognize in the trembling characters, the handwriting of Beatrice. She begged him, by the love he bore to God, that very night to try, by one o’clock, to enter the garden, and wait for her in the laurel grove—not to fail, if he did not wish to hear she was dead.

Carefully he concealed the letter, and went away. Reaching home, he took his sword and a hooked ladder, and at the appointed time went out alone. Arrived at the Cenci garden, he climbed over the wall, and waited, concealed, in the appointed place.

Now and then the rustling of leaves would draw Guido from his hiding-place ; seeing no one, he would return with a sigh. The hour indicated passed. *Oh, Dio !* Should the misfortune, mysteriously hinted at in the letter, have happened without a remedy ? He felt faint, and leaned against a tree for support.

A voice startled him—“ Guido !”—“ Beatrice !”—The agitated girl pressed the hand of her lover, who trembled like the leaves of the laurel against which he had leaned. Suddenly, Beatrice, as if startled by something that caused her great fear, forgetful of her maiden modesty, clasped him in her arms, and cried wildly :

“ Guido, my love, save me ! Guido, take me away—immediately—without a moment’s delay ; the ground beneath me burns my feet—the air I breathe is poison. Guido, let us go.”

"Beatrice!"

"Not a word—let us go, I implore you, before the chance is gone. If you do not wish me for your wife, no matter—put me in a convent—any one—even the Clarisse, where the door is walled up after one has entered—but save me, I entreat you, from this accursed place."

"*Oh, Dio!* My dearest, what frenzy is this? You are burning with fever."

"Here—within this place is death. Take me away from desperation—from eternal perdition—what frenzy do I feel! Imagine crimes that would cause men of blood to turn pale—crimes, that would cause the hair of parricides to stand on end—that freeze the bones—make the teeth chatter as with the ague—that stifle the voice, and petrify the tears; imagine all the crimes ever told of the family of Atridæ—for which the Eternal Father might start from his immortal throne, and seize his thunderbolt—that would make even the cheeks of the devil himself burn with shame; imagine these—imagine more—and you will not find all those equal to the infamies plotted and accomplished in Rome—here—in the palace of Count Cenci."

"You fill me with terror; but speak—tell me."

"Could I tell them, and you listen to them? If I should tell, you would see my blush break through the darkness which surrounds us—I should die of shame at your feet. But know this, that I, a maiden, and a Roman lady—I, from whose lips there never escaped a word which was not modest—I, by whom a thought was never conceived which could not be confided to the Guardian Angel—I would rather live the infamous life of a courtesan, than stay one hour, one minute within that threshold, overflowing with the wrath of God—mysteries of horrors, which ought not, and cannot be revealed."

"But how can you go with me thus? How can you scale the wall, encumbered with your dress? Wait until to-morrow."

"To-morrow ! Alas ! perhaps too late now ! I will not leave you—I will bind myself to you. Go—go—run, for I will follow you."

"Be it then as you will ; we will go, with God's help."

"Without taking leave of the master of the house ? This is not courteous," cried a mocking voice, and at the same time a heavy blow with an axe was aimed at Guido. Fortunately, it missed him, for it would have cut him in two ; but it struck with force against the laurel near the lovers, and cut it down like a reed ; the tree fell, and in falling struck and separated the hands of Beatrice and Guido, which were joined. Unlucky omen of an unhappy love.

Guido, fiercely moved, but not frightened, groped in the dark to find Beatrice, when a strong hand pushed him many steps back, and at the same time a man close to him said in a low tone :

"Fool ! Fly, or you are a dead man. I will pursue you to save you ;" and then with louder voice cried : "Ah ! traitor, you shall not escape—here—take that, and that !"

Throughout the garden, mingled with the roaring of the wind, were heard terrible threats and confused voices. The hoarse voice of Count Cenci, like a bird of ill omen, screamed :

"Flesh ! blood !—kill him—kill him like a dog !"

Guido ran, confused by this unforeseen attack ; but, on a sudden, as if ashamed of having left Beatrice exposed to the rage of her terrible father, although unconscious how to help her, turned quickly, and put his hand upon his sword ; but before he was able to draw it, his pursuer, overtaking him, said :

"Why do you stop ? For God's sake, fly !"

"And Beatrice ?"

"There is one who will watch for her. Come—quick—you cannot save her, and will only lose yourself." And he pushed him towards the ladder, which he held firmly, in order that he

might ascend ; then struck his dagger violently against the wall, so that the blade was broken into the minutest particles, sending out sparks, adding at the same time oaths and cries, enough to make the vault of heaven tremble.

Count Cenci arrived, panting heavily, and asked :

“ Where is the dead man ? Lights, bring lights, that I may see his wounds—lights, that I may tear his heart out of his breast and strike it upon his face. Where is he ? ”

“ He has escaped,” replied Marzio, sorrowfully.

“ How, escaped ? it is not true ; he must be here slain. Escaped ! Ah ! traitorous dogs ! you have let him go. Whom shall I trust now ? The right hand plays Judas with the left. Of you, Marzio, of you—I have been suspicious for a long time. Beware ! my suspicions may change into steel points.” Scarcely had the words escaped him, than the Count thought how incautiously he had uttered them ; he bit his lips as if to punish them for being so indiscreet ; and, to repair the mischief, added immediately after, with milder accents : “ For some time past you have been less diligent, Marzio, in serving me ; I shall not keep you—although should you leave me, it would be like losing one of my hands ; still I prefer to lose you, than to think you less attentive and faithful.”

A word spoken, and a stone thrown never return. The arabesques on the scabbard, and the incisions on the hilt do not make the point of the poniard less sharp. The words of Cenci had struck the heart of Marzio like a stone hurled into the water ; its surface, hardly ruffled, becomes quickly smooth again ; and he replied in a complaining tone :

“ Say rather that your Excellency is tired of me. It is the common fate of servants. There is no ink which can write their long and faithful services on the hearts of their masters. For any time that Fortune is against you, lo ! ingratitude steps in



with a sponge, and erases everything ; patience ! to-morrow I shall take off your livery."

A common proverb says—that in the skinner's shop there is nothing but fox skins ; and it is true ; for presumptuous men, trusting too much in their own mind, strength and fortune, let themselves sometimes be caught by those whom they least suspect. Cæsar did not doubt Brutus, and was killed. Henry of Guise thought that Henry of Valois would not have dared to look at him, much less kill him, and he *did* kill him. Cenci trusted in having deceived Marzio, and Marzio, as we shall see, deceived him.

"Marzio, what are words uttered in a moment of passion ? Wind that blows. I look upon you as the most loyal servant I ever had, and now I mean to prove it to you."

The Count, accompanied by several servants, who carried torches, went in search of Beatrice, and soon found her ; for she had stood immovable, overwhelmed with what had happened. When he saw her all his savage rage was again kindled, and seizing her by the arm, he shook her furiously, saying, with bitter sarcasm :

"And you are the modest maiden to whom the words of love and pleasure are incomprehensible, like voices in an unknown tongue ? You the chaste girl, who guards the lily, which should increase the glories of paradise ? Shameless ! wicked ! You a receiver of secret lovers—you a provoker of infamous pleasures—not sought, you seek ! Tell me, who was this man with whom just now you stood embraced ?"

Beatrice looked at him and was silent. The old man, stung by this calmness, which was stupor, continued :

"Tell me, unless you would have me kill you ;" but Beatrice, persisting in her silence, he, mad with anger, thrust his hands into her hair, and tore it lock by lock ; nor did he stop there, but cursed her with more atrocious curses than ever fell on guilty woman, and struck her on the breast, neck, and face. Oh !



let us turn aside ; for who could, without a shudder, look upon her delicate forehead and cheeks furrowed by deep scratches, her divine eyes swollen, and from her nostrils, descending upon her sweet lips, blood mixed with tears? He threw her upon the ground, dragged her by the hair, and would stop this torture only to begin another. He trampled upon her—and she always silent ; only once there came from the bottom of her heart these words :

“ Oh ! It is fatal ! ”

“ Let every one go from this place,” the Count ordered to his servants; “ you, Marzio, remain and listen ! I had thought to give her to you to watch, in proof of the trust which I replece in you—but it is better I should watch her myself, that she may not charm you. Go into my study ; in my desk, in the first drawer, on the right hand, you will find a bunch of keys ; take them, and bring them here—hasten—quick—haven’t you returned yet ? ”

Marzio, obliged to remain an unwilling spectator to this shocking scene, flew like lightning, and returned with the keys ; he lifted Beatrice, and, interposing himself between her and her father, feigned to push her roughly into the cellar.

Marzio had left Count Cenci some steps behind, when a groaning voice reached his ear, in these words :

“ To die thus—without bread—and without sacrament—oh, treacherous Count ! ”

Marzio thought some other mysterious crimes, besides those now contemplated, were hidden in these subterraneous passages, and turned his face in the direction whence the sound came. Count Cenci rejoined him panting just at this moment ; and cast a glance of rage upon him.

“ Did you hear groans ? ” asked the Count.

“ A groan ! ”

“ Yes, like a soul in pain ? ”

"It sounded to me like the moaning of the wind, which rushes through these passages."

"No, no—they are groans—for here my great-grandfather kept imprisoned an enemy of his, and made him starve to death; it was afterwards said, that ghosts were seen here; and I believe it."

"God help us! For my part I would not enter here even with the *Agnus Dei* in my pocket."

"You would do right. Open that door—there—the one to the right—the third one—that is it."

Marzio opened it, and the Count pushed Beatrice roughly in.

"Go, cursed girl, now try how the bread of penitence and the water of grief taste."

Beatrice, thus harshly pushed, fell upon the pavement; and, in her fall, hit her face against a projecting stone, wounding herself again on her mouth: overcome by pain, she fainted.

When she regained her senses, she rose from the ground; and found herself alone in the midst of darkness. She leaned against the wall, and said:

"Fatal! Fatal! God has abandoned me. No one living dares or can assist me; no one. Destiny falls upon me like the vaults of St. Peter. Oh! so much wind raised to break a reed; and since thine, O God, are the treasures of the tempest, thou wilt not condemn me if I bend to its fury. Guido, alas! he is dead surely—perhaps at this moment talking with Virgilio—and both are waiting for me. Alas! Guido, do not accuse me of your death, now, that I can speak to you without shame, I can confess how great, how infinite my love for you was. But why, God forgive you, why did you wish to unite your destiny with mine? Did I not tell you that my days flowed like the waters of desolation, which, wherever they flow, carry death? Did I not tell you? can you deny it? Oh! why am I alive? Why cannot I die? They

say we must not destroy ourselves ! No ? The soul must feel, suffer, and not will. Generations are waves, urged by the hand of fate to flow and overflow the shores of the world without wishing it, without even knowing it. And I would cheerfully bear this fate, if I did not know myself to be a seed of misfortune, born to ripen into an harvest of tears to all those who love me. My years spread like the boughs of the poisonous tree, that kills the unfortunate one who rests beneath it. It would be charity to uproot this cursed plant from the earth, to extinguish this torch, lighted in hell, which consumes itself consuming others—from whose fiery drops comes a conflagration. But the soul ! What ? Will God hold it as a target to his fury in this world and the next ? God, with mercy for all, will He persist in persecuting me throughout Eternity ? And should I suffer the torments of the lost, will they surpass those I endure here ? In hell at least I shall not be reviled—I shall not cause perdition to others. I do not accuse thee, O God ! On the back of thine only son thou didst put the cross of wood, and he fell beneath it three times ; thou hast given me one of lead—I cannot bear it, and I throw it down. Whoever will, may have my desolate soul—the covenant of my life is too hard, and I break it.”

So saying, with the inexpressible desire of killing herself pervading her mind, deliberately, with death depicted on her face, her soul flowing over with desperation, she rushed with all her strength at the wall, and struck her head against it. Alas ! she staggered, opened her arms, and fell rigidly at the foot of it.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE MURDERED GIRL OF VITTANA.

———"absorbing, sweeping, whole revenge,  
Which like the sheeted fire from heaven, must blast  
Without distinction, as it fell of yore,  
Where the dead hath quench'd two cities' ashes.

BYRON, *Marino Faliero*.

WHAT a great mercy it would have been to have taken this weary, saddened soul, that after the short pilgrimage of sixteen years upon this earth, found no asylum but the valley of death ! It pleased God to do otherwise. The mass of thick hair deadening the blow, prevented its being mortal. We cannot say how many hours she passed in this miserable plight ; when, at last, she regained her senses, she raised herself with difficulty into a sitting posture, neither remembering the place where she was, nor how she came to it. She pressed her hands to her mouth and head, which pained her greatly, and she knew not why. She heard her name called ; listened anxiously, and heard it again ; then she remembered what Virgilio had said, about his mother's calling him, and the voice she now heard seemed to her that of both her mother and brother. She thought that at their intercession, divine mercy had saved her from eternal perdition, and the idea was so consoling, that she started joyfully to her feet ; and clasping her hands, exclaimed, "Thanks, thanks, dear mother ; thanks, Virgilio, my love ; come to me, come—let me see you—open your arms—I will

clasp you in an eternal embrace. Why is not Guido with you? He has died young! But if he comes here—with you—to me who am his bride, he will not be grieved at having died; and now I can kiss him, can I not, mother, even in your presence, for he is my husband?"

But the voice coming nearer again said:

"Lady Beatrice, rouse yourself; do not lose courage. Oh, Lady Beatrice, courage, it is I—it is Marzio who calls."

"Marzio! This, in the world below was the name of a servant, who was friendly to me; it was he who meant to crush the head of Count Cenci on the day of the feast; it was a crime, but pity for me had induced him. Let us all pray God to pardon him; let him put this sin to my account, and may I atone for it in purgatory."

"Oh, my lady! I fear God will punish me, but because I did not send him out of the world."

"And now, what is Marzio doing? Is he dead, too? Has he also proved that the fatality which comes from me is contagious? Has he also learned, poor man, how mortally my glance wounds?"

"Lady Beatrice, for God's sake do not rave so; come here, cheer up—listen. The wicked old man, Count Cenci, now sleeps—do you wish he may never awake?"

"What do you say, Marzio? I did not understand, I am bewildered."

"He who begat you to torture you; he who calls himself your father; he who, if he lives, will kill you; do you wish him to die—to-night—in five minutes? His life hangs on the point of my knife."

"No, no," suddenly exclaimed Beatrice, recovering at once her senses. "Marzio, do not, for the love of God; I should hate you, I would accuse you. Let him live and repent; he will repent one day, perhaps."

"He repent ! Have wolves ever been seen at confession ? I have told you, if he live, he will make you die."

"What matters it ? Have I not attempted to die ? Oh ! how great a woe it is to return to life ! Marzio, my faithful servant, I have no more breath. I should like to quench my thirst in death. Have you never heard of those ancient people who kept a friend or affectionate servant, so that if necessity required them to leave this world, they might inflict the kindly blow ? Marzio, I do not ask so much of you, only bring me the juice of some herb which has the virtue of closing the eyes to a peace which I never have enjoyed in this world."

"No, by the soul of Anna Riparella ! if I can help it, you shall live. Unfortunate lady ; do not become desperate. In a little while I will come back to you ; now I must return to your wicked father ; should he awake and surprise us, there would be no way of escape." And he went away weeping, to think of the miserable state to which Beatrice was reduced. Deep in this thought he was about to leave the place, when he remembered the groans he had heard the night before. He retraced his steps, but could hear nothing ; then he began softly to shake all the doors which he could see, and at one the groans became more audible and painful than ever.

"Alas ! I am dying of hunger—of thirst ; it should not have been thus—to have been hung at the proper time would have been well, I was prepared for that—after having confessed and taken the sacrament ; with the priest at my side—with all things as they should be."

"Who are you ? Answer quickly."

"Oh, your Excellency, don't you know who I am ? Open the door for charity, I am hungry enough to eat my flesh."

"Answer quickly, I say, or I shall leave you."

"I am a man who has an open account with justice ; but truly for boyish frolics —and for the rest I am an honest bandit,



and above all faithful : my name is Olimpio. Count Cenci shut me in here two days ago, I believe, but I cannot say, for here I neither see when the sun rises or sets ; he promised to return, and I am still expecting him. Oh ! if you are a Christian, for the love of God, give me a little water—a little bread—a little light—for mercy's sake !”

“ Horrible ! to let a human being die of hunger, and without sacrament ! This villain's soul is like hell, to which there is no bottom. Olimpio, I cannot help you now ; be patient, I will soon return to you ; now I have no key.”

“ And who are you ?”

“ I am Marzio.”

“ Did you come here to enjoy my agony ?”

“ I have never betrayed any one ; keep up your courage—farewell.”

“ Once, among ourselves, we never betrayed each other—I will wait—I will hope—I will suffer in silence ; but oh ! Marzio, return quickly if you wish to find me alive—I am hungry—cold—thirst is killing me.”

The blood, heated by rage, and the violent excitement had so swollen Count Cenci's lame leg, that he could not move from his lying posture. He had closed his eyes to an unquiet sleep ; when he awoke he tried to rise, but his intense pain prevented him. He ground his teeth in rage, and exclaimed with an oath :

“ And I must trust this traitor !” Then he called Marzio, who entered immediately and silently.

“ Marzio, see how I trust you ; take the key of Beatrice's prison, and carry bread and water to her.”

“ Anything else ?”

“ No ; and, Marzio, take some holy relic with you, to expel the evil spirits, in case any should appear to you. If you hear a voice, don't mind it ; it is a deception of the devil ; and avoid

above all others the passage on the left—it was there my great-grandfather's enemy died by starvation."

"Your Excellency, why do we not go together?"

"Don't you see—curses on it! that I cannot move?"

"If your daughter is bruised, must I not dress her wounds?"

"No. But do you suppose she is injured?"

"It seemed so to me; and her beauty might be spoiled by it."

"I do not want her, that is, at present, to lose her beauty. In that closet there is some ointment and medicine; if it should prove necessary, attend to it."

Marzio seized dexterously the other keys, for he had taken away the one belonging to Beatrice's prison while the Count slept, and he returned to the vaults.

"Lady Beatrice," said Marzio, bitterly, when he saw her, "see the gifts your father sends you;" and raising his lantern, he looked upon that angelic face, stained with blood. He repressed a groan of anguish, and added, as well as he could, in milder tones:

"Come here, and let me wash your face."

And he gently bathed the wounds, applied the ointment, and bandaged them.

"Oh, my God!" he repeated from time to time, "dost Thou see these iniquities? And if Thou dost, how canst Thou permit them?"

The work accomplished, he said:

"Young lady, see the gifts which he, whom you call father, sends you—bread and water. I, against his express commands, have added other food; but I certainly cannot comfort you in prolonging a life which imposes the most cruel torments; and what pains me more than all is, that from this time I can help you no longer, for"—and here his voice sounded more harshly—"I intend to-day to leave your house."

Beatrice bent her head, like one so overpowered with grief that no new trouble could be felt.

“ Guido is dead, and now you leave me ?”

“ And who told you he is dead ?”

“ Does he live, then ?”

“ He lives, and is safe.”

Beatrice leaned her face upon Marzio's shoulder, and remained a long time in that position, then, in a low voice, said :

“ Guido lives, and you abandon me ?”

“ But it is you who abandon yourself. Listen : I will confess to you that which I would not tell my own father, should he rise from the dead. I entered Count Cenci's house to fulfill a vow. Would you know that vow ? It was to kill him. His daily crimes have only strengthened me in my design ; besides, taking him out of the world, not only would satisfy my revenge, but it would acquire a merit in the eyes of man and God. But as this event will cause you sorrow, I will not commit it under your eyes ; more do not ask of me—do not weary yourself in talking—no one can dissuade me from it—no one ; what is to be fulfilled, must be : by the sword he has killed, by the sword he must die—these are Christ's own words.”

“ And in what way has the Count harmed you ? When you came into the house, you were, I thought, entirely unknown to him.”

“ But I knew him. If he had harmed me, wounded me, I could have forgiven him. Certainly, I am a great sinner—but once I had a Christian heart. He has killed my soul, and spared my life ; now I am dead to all things, but one, and this I have told you. Hear me ! If I knew Count Cenci before entering his house, this will not prove him more wicked ; for in him, one crime more or less matters nothing ; but it may, perhaps, stay the curses against his murderer upon your lips. I have not much learning ; I will narrate as my heart prompts, and you can be-

lieve it as it were the Gospel. I was born in Tagliacozzo ; my father died when I was a child, and left me farms and flocks ; my mother fell ill, so that she could take no care of me. I grew up ; fell in with bad companions ; I was wrapped in all manner of vices as in a cloak ; and at last, partly by gambling, partly through usury, I squandered all my property: with the last glass of wine drunk in my house, my friends drunk oblivion to me ; they vanished with the smoke of the last dish ; but at their disappearance others appeared ; they were creditors ; they despoiled me of everything—turned me out of the house. Merciless men ! In the day-time I was forced to carry my mother in my arms to the hospital ; malicious boys jeered at me in the streets ; one threw a stone at me and my sick mother. Mankind is a wicked race ! Nor did the trouble cease here: before reaching the hospital the police came after me, took my mother from my arms, laid her in the middle of the street, and bore me off to prison. My creditors, not satisfied with taking my property, even wished to drink my very blood. I heard smothered groans—it was my mother who wept. I turned to comfort her, but could not see her, my eyes were so full of tears. I tried to speak—not even that—it was well.”

Marzio stopped a moment to wipe the perspiration from his forehead ; then continued :

“ I broke from the prison ; betook myself to the woods ; I revenged myself on everybody. To the boy, who threw the stone at my mother, I broke his head upon a stone ; it was well. Henceforth, I signed my calendar with the point of my knife—every day was a stream of blood ; my flesh burnt ; blood intoxicates more than wine. God will judge if I could resist the devil, who took possession of my soul ; I will not add any excuse ; if I deserve pity, let Him pardon me ; if not, let Him condemn me. But of what I have done, of what I shall do, I know not how to repent—the work which revenge has put in death’s hands is not

yet accomplished ; to my list, one head is yet wanting—your father's. The air of the Neapolitan kingdom was not good for me ; I entered the territory of the Church, and enlisted in the band of Marco Sciarra.

“ What I committed as a bandit, there is no need for you to know ; let not the Eternal Justice know ! One Saturday, about sunset, I was sitting upon a stone near the edge of the forest, my elbows leaning on my gun, my gun upon my knees, and my face resting upon my closed hands. I was waiting for my companions near the oak of Rocca Odonisi to say our evening prayers, before the image of the Madonna of the Oaks, and to make our plans for the morrow. The air was like an oven ; the setting sun seemed a bloody heart within a bloody circle ; my long hair hung disordered over my eyes, which, gleaming in the sun's rays, also looked full of blood ; I pushed it behind my ears ; in vain. Everything appeared red : the sky, the fields and animals ; the trunks of the trees were of a copper color, and the leaves, shining with an emerald green, also reflected rays of blood. I had a horror of myself ! ‘ Am I afraid ? ’ I murmured ; ‘ why am I alone ? Oh, if I only had the company of a living being, to free me from my terror ! ’ I turned at the moment, and saw before me an angel's face, Lady Beatrice—a Madonna, stepped from her frame to gladden the earth ; and then—hear me—do not be offended—except being a little burnt by the sun, and much larger, she resembled you : she carried a pitcher on her head, and came to draw water from a neighboring spring. She did not stop upon seeing me (although I was dressed as a bandit, and armed), or seem to have any feelings of fear. And indeed what could she fear ? Her poverty defended her from robbery, a heart of Lucrezia, and a poniard, which held the tresses of her hair, against violence ; she pursued her walk, and when she passed before me, with a voice, like fresh leaves blown by the early breeze of spring, she said : ‘ May the Blessed Virgin save you ! ’ I did not raise my head, I did not an-



swer ; I only followed her with my eyes, until I could see her no longer. Then, thinking of the manner and the moment when she appeared, I exclaimed : ' the Lord has taken pity upon me ! ' But then reading the history of my crimes committed against heaven and earth, which seemed painted in blood, laughing at myself, I added : ' yes, truly, Christ has nothing else to do, but to take care of me ! ' And here the same voice, like a bush planted by Providence upon the edge of a precipice to save a fallen man, suddenly descended into my heart, repeating : ' May the Blessed Virgin save you.' It was the girl who, having filled her pitcher, returned home by the same way. The next evening I went again to the Oaks, and the girl consoled me with the usual salutation; and so on the next, and the next. What can I say more ? I could have lived a day without food, but not without seeing her. A whole month passed, without the girl or I ever missing, through storm or wind, to come every evening to the Oaks ; and in all this time she had never said more to me, than : ' May the Virgin save you ! ' and I to her : ' God reward you, Annetta ! ' Her name was Annetta Riparella, daughter of a shepherd belonging to Vittana. One evening, without rising from the stone where I was seated, I called to her with humble voice : ' Annetta, put down your pitcher, if you please, and come and sit down by me.' She put her pitcher down, looking intently in my eyes, and with hers led mine to the holy Image of the Oaks. By that I understood she meant to say : ' I place myself under the protection of the Madonna.' Then I arose, took her by the hand, and led her before the holy image, saying : ' Annetta, where are we going ? Is it not a long time that we have walked without knowing where we shall come at last ? Strangers dwell in the house of my father ; in the fields which were mine, others sow and reap. I can offer you nothing good, therefore I offer you nothing. On the contrary, hear me attentively, for I do not wish to deceive you : there is a reward placed upon my head ; all the water



which you have drawn from the spring would not be enough to wash my hands—do not look at them, you can discover nothing ; the blood with which they are stained only my eyes and God's can see. Uniting your life to mine, days of danger will await you, nights of fear, years of suffering, and a life of shame. To our children, should misfortune ever give them to us, do you know what inheritance I could leave them ? A bloody garment. To you what widow's dowry ? The name of the wife of the man who was hung. If I listened to my heart, I should wish you to take me for a husband ; if to my judgment, I would have you refuse me ; therefore I neither pray you, nor advise you : I have thrown the dice, and accept the fate that destiny sends me ; open your heart freely, and do not fear to offend me—for, by the Holy Virgin who hears us, if you wish to remain free, I swear from this moment you will never see my face again.' 'Marzio,' replied the girl, resolutely, 'I know your misdeeds and yourself ; that I have loved you for some time, my eyes must have told you ; better grief with Marzio, than joy with another. What matters it to me, if a reward is offered for your head ? should justice seek you, we will hide together ; if it finds us, we will defend ourselves ; if taken, we will die together. But it is not of this justice that my heart is afraid ; there is a justice, which finds without seeking ; an eye, that never shuts its eyelids upon sin ; it is this justice, Marzio, that you must appease ; what all the water in the river cannot do, one tear can—the tear of penitence.' So spoke Annetta, a simple girl, whose only education was drawn from the ardent love she bore the Mother of God. I felt as if a stone had broken in the middle of my heart, and humbly I replied : 'Annetta, I bind myself by an oath to abandon my present companions as soon as I can, for should I leave them suddenly, they would suspect treachery, and my death would follow the suspicion. They are many and powerful. Meanwhile I swear to abstain from any wicked deed, and also swear

to take you as my lawful wife, and love you always.' So saying I drew from my finger a ring, which had belonged to my mother ; and putting it near the face of the Holy Image as if to consecrate it, I placed it on her's, adding : ' You are my wife.' ' I don't own rings,' said Annetta, ' but take a lock of my hair as a pledge that I will marry you.' I drew out my knife, and she bent her head ; I cut it, but my hand trembled so, that the hair fell, and the wind carried it off. It was a bad omen ! She looked up, and smiling said : ' cut another, what does it matter ? If fortune will be kind, we will thank God ; if otherwise, it is all the same ; have I not told you to be ready for everything ?'

" A few days after, by means of our faithful spies, news came to Signor Marco that, from the kingdom of Naples and the states of the Church, a large band of armed men were coming to surround us, and then capture us easily. Signor Marco, who, although by adverse fortune forced to the condition of chief of the bandits, amply possessed all the qualities requisite for a good general, sent me without delay into the Abruzzi, to keep an eye on the police force of Naples, in order to surprise them in some ambush. He gave me minute instructions about places, and the means to be used ; and, thanks to the skill of our excellent captain, the undertaking was successful, and not one—not even one—policeman remained to carry home the news of their defeat. After ten days of absence, I returned. I let you imagine, who fully understand the pangs of love, with what tremor I drew near the Oaks of the Virgini. I found Annetta there—at the foot of the Oaks—I found her—but murdered !

" She had her hair torn from her head, her limbs and clothes also torn ; on her face I saw the impress of feet that had trampled on her ; a knife thrust in her bosom, the point coming out between her shoulders, and sticking into the ground.

" I bought a scarlet cloak ; I had a coffin of gilded wood made ; I put her into it with my own hands ; I covered the

black marks and wounds with flowers—how handsome she looked, even after death !—and accompanied by all the country people, in the midst of universal tears, I myself buried my beloved. In lowering her into the grave, my eyes grew dim, and I fell into it. When I regained my senses, I found myself seated on the ground ; the grave was filled, the priest supported me, weeping, and some good women tried to console me. I got up, and went away without uttering a word.

“Afterwards, I learned that for several days Count Cenci had been residing in Rocca Petrella, which we also call Rocca Ribalda ; the tracks of this man were marked with blood. A voice within me said : ‘he is the murderer !’ I began to inquire more particularly into the affair, and from a little shepherd boy I learned, that Annetta used to go every evening to the Oaks of the Virgin, and would remain there a long time, kneeling and praying before the Image. One evening, the boy saw a man pass by on horseback, who seemed to him, by his dress and bearing, to be a great lord. He stopped his horse, and stood looking at the girl until she had finished her prayer ; then, going up to her, seemed to try to enter into conversation with her, but she saluted him, and went on her way. The next evening the boy, being in the same place feeding his sheep, saw two ruffians come out of the forest, who, taking the girl unawares, bandaged her eyes and mouth, and, in spite of her struggles, carried her away. The boy had been silent through fear, he now spoke for gain ; so that with care, I derived minute information in regard to the dress and appearance of the man. I kept a lookout on the castle ; I wandered near its walls, like a wolf, in the night ; in the daytime I hid among the bushes, or on the branches of the trees. The castle was always closely shut, like a miser’s chest. But one day the gate opened, and a man came out, whom, by his dress, I recognized for one of the ruffians seen by the boy ; he walked cautiously, and carried, as we say, his head over his

shoulders ; but I fell on him like a falcon ; he was lying under my knees, and I had my hand to his throat, before he could escape. ‘I will save your life,’ I cried, ‘if you will confess to me how you killed the girl of the Oaks.’ Livid with fear, he told me that his master, Count Cenci, having seen the girl, and finding her handsome, conceived a desire to possess her ; therefore, he commanded another servant and himself to take her by force, and bring her to the castle, esteeming her an easy conquest ; but finding his flatteries were of no avail with the girl, and his threats still less, and believing he had already done too much honor to a peasant, he had recourse to violence, to which the girl had replied by using her hands courageously. Then the Count seized her by the neck, and she him, and they both fell on the ground, striking each other. Finally, the girl, more active, rose to her feet first, and kicking the Count in the face, exclaimed : ‘Take that, you old villain ! If I had my poinard you would be dead by this time ; but a kick is better for you ; in a few days my husband will return, and, by the Blessed Virgin, I will give him no peace until he brings me your ears for a present.’ Count Cenci rose in haste, without saying a word, and before the unfortunate girl was able to defend herself, gave her such a fierce blow with his knife, that it passed out between her shoulders, and she fell without having time to say even, ‘Jesus !’ or ‘Maria !’ A groan, and she was dead. He then kicked her, in revenge for the ignominious kick she had given him. ‘In the night he commanded us to carry her body to the Oaks of the Virgin, and we did so ; for they who eat the bread of others must obey. The Count followed us with a lantern ; and when we had laid the body on the ground, he drew his knife, replaced it in the wound, and pushing it with force, fixed it fast in the ground. “When your husband returns,” exclaimed the Count, “you can tell him this also.”’ When I heard this, I was so overpowered with fury—always an enemy to well conceived designs—that I

cried to the fellow : ‘ Go, then, and inform your master that the husband of Annetta Riparella has returned, and to-night will visit him at his house, as it is his duty.’ And I did not fail in my promise ; for, aided by the most daring of my companions, I assailed the castle, sacked and burned the palace. I burned the den, but the fox was saved. The Count, having no force to resist us, went off hastily ; and so great was his hurry to get away, that I found in his room, on his table, a half-written letter. If you should ever go to that castle, you can see the marks of my revenge impressed with fire on the walls. What remained to me in the world, and what remains now ? To revenge myself, and die. Having related the whole affair to Signor Marco, he praised me for the deed I had done, and counselled me to persevere in it, and made me most generous offers. Then I asked for my leave, and he, with great regret, gave it to me. I cut my hair, shaved my beard, changed my clothes, and came to Rome, swearing by the soul of my dead wife to temper my indiscreet fury with prudence.

“ I was revolving in my mind how to enter your house, when fortune favored me by a singular accident. Walking in the Piazza di Spagna one day, I heard a noise behind me, a confused number of voices crying : ‘ look out for your life—mind your life!’ I turned, and saw a carriage dragged by two powerful horses, who had broken the traces, and were running away. The driver had been knocked off his seat, his head had struck against a post, and he lay senseless on the ground ; some fled, some looked out of the windows, and from the door-way of their shops, without giving aid or even thinking of doing so. I rushed at the bit of one of the horses, and although he dragged me furiously a little way, I succeeded in stopping him. Then a gentleman of mature age, putting his tranquil and mild face from out the carriage window, commended my courage, and requested me to present myself during the day at the palace of Count Cenci.



“ So it was ; without knowing it, I had saved the life of my atrocious enemy. I was not sorry for it—on the contrary I rejoiced ; since if he had died in any other way, than by my sword and my hands, it would have seemed to me as if my revenge was lost.

“ The Count received me with the affability becoming a nobleman ; inquired about me, and hearing I was idle in Rome, himself proposed to employ me in his house. It was the very thing I had sought with so much eagerness : never pilgrim kissed more devoutly the Madonna in the Holy House of Loretto, than I touched the threshold of his palace, with the intention of surrounding Cenci with solitude and desolation. To disinherit him of all affection, surviving his own children, whom I designed to kill with various deaths, orphan in heart as he had made me—when life had become a torment to him, death a relief, to keep him until his pulses felt pains of agony ; and when his benumbed soul had become accustomed to sorrow—then to hurl him by a bloody death into the bloody tomb of his children.

“ By showing myself ready to execute any order, by subtle counsels, by always proposing new schemes, I acquired by degrees his confidence, inasmuch as he can trust, who always mistrusts both himself and others. You may conceive how great was my surprise to find I could afford him no better pleasure than to kill his children ! His unnatural hatred conquered mine ; and even had I continued to hate you because born of him, could I torment you worse than your father. For hate, then, was substituted profound pity towards you all, and particularly for you, Lady Beatrice—because for you, poor girl, I feel such an affection—such dear love, that I am reminded of the good soul of my dead Annetta, and in spite of myself it forces me to tears ”

And overcome by grief, Marzio was about to kneel before Beatrice ; but she with gentle hand prevented him, saying :

“ Rise, Marzio, rise ; dust should never bow down to dust,



and we are all dust ;” and then added : “ Marzio, I advise you to take heed to what escapes from your mouth ;” but with so sweet and supplicating a voice, that Marzio was not mortified.

“ Gentle lady, why should you forbid me to kneel to you ! Sacred things are worshipped on our knees, and misfortune has already consecrated you ; no being in this world ever resembled the weeping Madonna more than you. Do not doubt ; no, never will you hear from my lips a word that could offend your modest ears : I was about to say, which a father might not say to a daughter ; but the example of Count Cenci has stayed the comparison upon my lips. Why should I not love you, if you remind me so much of my poor lost Annetta ? My wife is dead, and my lover’s affection buried with her. The love I feel for you is not that of a devotee, a father or a brother, and yet it partakes of all these three. I know you are beloved by Monsignore Guido Guerra, and I esteem him highly, for he has placed his love on a worthy maiden. Marzio has favored your love more than you think. Incautious ones ! How many times the malicious old man would have surprised you had it not been for me ! This last time, if I was not able to forewarn Monsignore Guerra on account of the suddenness of the event, I obliged him to fly, and thus saved his life, for he would not abandon you. I showed him how he would lose himself, and not save you either ; and I also promised him to take care of you, and I would keep my promise, if you did not prevent me ; and for this I have resolved to leave the house to-morrow : I entered it to accomplish my revenge, and now I must leave it if I want to fulfill it. On one side you do not wish me to rid you of this wicked old man ; and although I cannot renounce my vow of revenge, still, that I may bring less sorrow upon you, I will not kill him under your own eyes ; on the other side, I am afraid that this death occurring in the house, suspicion would rest upon the innocent ; therefore the best way is to quit the house, for if I stay, I can do you no good,

and would only ruin myself. Lady Beatrice, if I should beg you to remember a man who had no other feeling than one of goodwill and reverence towards you ; if I should ask you not to hate me entirely, should I be too presumptuous ?”

“I shall remember that you wished to kill my father : when you are gone I shall think you could defend me, and that you have abandoned me. Ah ! let the Count live ; his years are many—do not hasten him to God’s judgment ; wait until he calls him.”

“Your voice is powerful, but cannot conquer the one which rages in my breast. Impossible ! Do you not see expressed in it the will of God, since my design in appeasing the vengeance of the woman I loved, brings safety also to you, unfortunate girl ?”

“God’s finger, Marzio, does not write his counsels in blood !”

“Why not ? The destroying Angel wrote in Egypt the decree of God impressed on the threshold of the doors with letters of blood : so at least I have heard our priests say. You forget, lady, that here in Rome, God had for his vicar Sixtus V ; now do you believe the present one, Clement VIII, has better feelings than his predecessors ?”

“I know nothing of priests ; I know Christ reprobated the law which says an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and wishes us to love as brothers all those who do evil unto us. Marzio, leave to God his judgments ; that which in God would be justice, in you would be crime.”

“But how can I let him live ?” exclaimed Marzio, striking his forehead, as if he suddenly remembered a forgotten thing ; “do you not know that he breathes death ? Hear me ; if I should stay here, an unfortunate man would die of starvation.”

“What ! of starvation ?”

“Alas, poor me ! talking with you one might even forget

paradise. Poor Olimpio ! while I delay, you count the moments with the anguish of thy starving body."

So saying, he took in haste the lantern, the bunch of keys, and the basket, and with swift steps went to the other side of the vault.

Beatrice, scarcely able to move, followed with fatigue his steps, curious to learn the cruel mystery which seemed hidden in Marzio's words.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ADDRESS.

"Per il che non potendo durare in così infelice vita prese la strada della sorella Olimpia, e mandò al Papa un buono e ben composto memoriale; ma o che quello fosse dato, o no, la sua ragionevole inchiesta non ebbe effetto, nè si è trovato in segretaria dei memoriali quando ne faceva bisogno mentr'era in prigione."

*Manoscritto del tempo.*

Il vento ne portava le parole.—PETRARCA, *Sonetti*.

BEATRICE followed Marzio, who, coming to Olimpio's door, called him; receiving no answer, with anxiety he again cried:

"Olimpio! Olimpio!"

A weak voice replied:

"Go, wicked traitor—free me from temptation—let me commend myself to God, as best I can, so that I may die in peace."

Marzio opened the door; and to such a state of weakness was the bandit reduced by the fasting and darkness, that the feeble light of the lantern painfully dazzled his eyes, and made him stagger. Marzio supported him, and prevailed upon him to drink some cordial which he had. After a few moments of relief, hunger and thirst again raged in Olimpio; he rushed like a wild beast upon the basket, nor could Marzio have stopped him if he had not been so weak. Marzio warned him, that unless careful, he would escape starvation only to die of eating.

Beatrice, astonished, gazed at the bandit with horror; for his long, damp hair hung down from his temples like leeches gorged with blood; his bronze face had become of an ashy color; his lips black; his eyes green, and shining like glass.

Revived by a discreet allowance of food and drink, he began to speak, in spite of the groans which issued from his lips :

"Renegade ! Traitorous dog ! Fiend ! To starve me to death, eh ? To confess without torture is not right—the dead resuscitated kills the living—no matter—I must speak—I must give vent to my rage. Rascally old man—you wished to make me silent—I understood it—I have killed five men on your account—four by the knife, and the last, the carpenter, burned to death—poor young man !—burned like a mole drenched in vitriol. Ah ! Ah ! *Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine.* And his wife, Angiolina ? An angel, truly, in deeds as well as name. Lady Luisa ! Holy Virgin bless her ! See how at the very depth of evil I am ! Well ; Lady Luisa stands higher up, at the top of goodness. The flame of the carpenter's house, the robbery of the curate, the abduction of Lucrezia—all committed, all ordered by him ; I only lent my hand—he directed it. Infamous hand ! I would cut you off, were it not for the mouth which wants to eat. Oh, beasts of the field, you find something to feed on, we cannot ; how many crimes for bread ! The fox had laid the trap to catch the wolf and destroy him ; I see all clearly now—treachery upon treachery—a double game—bravo ! Wounded, pursued by the hounds of the law, I take refuge here—the Count says to himself : ' This man wants to be hidden ; we will put him three feet under ground—he can be secured in no better way—oh, bravo ! ' And then the Count also thought : ' This man is sought by justice ; and should he be put to the torture, he might injure me in his confessions ; when he is dead, he can no longer speak.' Marzio, give me some water. Is not Count Cenci a very obliging gentleman ? Yes, by the Holy Virgin ! Sir Count, if this is the hospitality you show your friends and servants, in faith, your income will never diminish—some drink."

"Olimpio, do not worry, be silent ; eat at your ease—rest

yourself—regain your strength—in a few hours I shall come to take you out.”

“No ; you will not shut me up again ; now I am thirsty and greedy for air ; I feel as if I had the Church of St. Peter on my breast. St. Peter ! Did I say St. Peter ? Well ; I do not even trust him who holds the keys in his hands, for he practices the same trade, and uses them more to shut than to open.”

“Olimpio, be easy ; now you see I have not betrayed you yet.”

“Is the minute that passes a guaranty for the next ? Once, among twelve apostles, one could hardly find a Judas ; and now, among twelve men, eleven are traitors, and the twelfth is uncertain. If I must die, let me drink another glass of wine, and I will go ; but as heroes and Roman banditti should die—in the open air.”

“Fool ! does this seem to you the face of a traitor ?” said Marzio, uncovering his head. “I have promised to save you, and I will ; do you not see that you stagger like a drunken man, and your knees knock together ? The wine has got into your head. Now they would discover all, and kill both of us.”

“But who is that woman with you ? Is she not his daughter ? What business has she here ?” said Olimpio, rubbing his eyes.

“It is, indeed, Lady Beatrice ; but be assured she did not come here to do you harm.”

“Well, since there is no help for it, I will trust you—that is an ugly word, Marzio, since I have seen that among lords, and all such kind of people, who rank in high life, oaths and promises are no more thought of than last year’s grasshoppers ; I presume among us it is different ; for between me and you—it seems there is no more difference than between you and me—equal station ; and we are peasants. Marzio, I would bind myself to you with the promise of a reward ; but my soul is already



mortgaged to the devil, and as for the body, you would have to quarrel about that with Master Alessandro, the hangman. If some enemy of yours should have suffered in his"—— and with his hand he touched his throat.

Marzio shrugged his shoulders, as if to say, "I can do this for myself." Then Beatrice spoke :

"Marzio will save you, do not doubt it ; and I, as a reward for it, ask of you something which you can give me very easily, and in giving which the profit will be wholly yours. Promise me, that this danger escaped, you will change your way of life."

"Oh, Lord ! Can one change his life as he can his dress ? I have learned nothing else than to use my steel, and steel is made to wound."

"Steel is not made to wound the hearts of brothers, by which death comes ; but to till the ground, which is a source of life. Change your weapon into a spade, and God's mercy will reach even you."

Beatrice said this to the bandit so calmly, without irritation, and with so mild a voice, that Olimpio, accustomed to bow to other's counsels, just as a belfry would to the wind of spring, felt within his breast something which he did not know whether to attribute to the words he heard, or to the fasting he had suffered. He thought some time about it, and not succeeding in solving the doubt, he leaned towards that which seemed most probable, and said : "perhaps it is the fasting !"

Marzio, reëntering the prison of Beatrice, said :

"Your father is a mine of crimes ; the more you dig the more you find. I, who am not easily frightened, looking into that desperate abyss, am horror-struck, and can understand nothing. But you will not consent to his death ! Better so : Keep yourself pure like a white rose ; although it is my opinion, should it be stained red with wicked blood, it would not lose its merit with

men, or God. Be cheerful, however ; your slavery will be less long than you may fear."

"God forbid it, for I know to what a ransom I owe liberty ; and, Marzio, if you loved me truly, as you say, if my miseries had touched your heart, ah ! you would not persist in rendering me the most unhappy woman in the world, by your designs of killing my father."

"Say rather your executioner."

"My father—since by him I had life, and through him I live and breathe."

"He gave you life to contaminate it, and take it away."

"Be it so ; but if he forgets a father's duty, should I forget a daughter's ?"

"No ; then every one to his duty : to me, that of avenger. Cease—I repeat to you, lady—you strive in vain ; you could more easily transport with your hands the obelisks of Pope Sixtus from Rome, than stir me from my purpose."

"I am not your mistress, but I am mistress of myself."

"Nor do I object to it."

"Then beware, for I am ready to warn the Count so that he may be prepared."

"Warn him. I am not a fox to set a snare for the chicken ; before falling upon him, I will roar, so that he may know the lion is coming."

"But should he kill you ?"

"I have heard it said that, anciently, in the deeds called judgments of God, one coffin alone was carried ; one of the two combatants had to fill it. If Providence judges of human affairs, does it seem to you that I ought to fill it ? A few more hours shall I stay in your house : have you anything more to say to me, Lady Beatrice ? I by myself am nothing ; but a small copper, given with a kind heart to the poor, is rewarded by one of those prayers which go straight to heaven."

"I warn you still, I will prevent you all I can."

"You?"

"Even the ant saved the pigeon by stinging the foot of the archer. And now, Marzio, that I have said all this, are you not angry with me?"

"Not at all. Did I not say before, that every man must spin the thread that fate puts in his hands? Who knows? If I had found you different from what you are, I might have esteemed you of greater wisdom, but perhaps loved you less."

"Well, Marzio, as a last favor, I ask you to leave me the lantern for a little while, and bring me writing materials. I do not wish to omit attempting every means for safety, more that I may not reproach myself with negligence, than any hope I have of it. I will write an address to His Holiness, begging him to provide for me as he did for Olimpia. This appears to me the best plan. I now repent of the flight I would have taken with Guido, which I, excited by passion, contemplated. I know it would have created a scandal; the wrong would have been mine; and the world, ignorant of the causes that instigated me, would confound my determination with the vulgar love of a shameless girl, who lets her will overcome her reason. And besides, on my account, every plan of Guido's would have been spoiled: for he does not wish to displease the Pope, and it is enough for a discreet girl to respect his wish. The last means of safety must be this: Guido must try to cause this address to reach the hands of the Pope soon, and obtain the desired resolution. You must then, in order to excite Guido not to delay, tell him that, which I should die of shame to repeat to my own mother. No, no—ah me! Don't say anything to him—promise me, Marzio, that you will say nothing to him."

"I will do as you wish. Lady Beatrice, listen: I fear nothing for myself now, for I am ready to leave here in a few hours, and your father, cunning as he is, cannot surpass me. He even

suspects me, and his suspicions change to daggers' points : he told me so. The confidence he placed in me this morning is feigned in order to deceive me : at any rate I am not afraid. But you, weak, unarmed, and powerless, should fear more than I : I wish to make you a present, which may be of service to you in any extremity ; it is worth as much as we wish it—it is a dagger."

"Thanks ; when no other escape is left me, death with this will be more certain, and less painful."

"In a few moments I will bring you some writing materials ; go immediately to work. I will pretend to clean my pistols in the garden : should Count Cenci come near the vaults to surprise you, I will fire the pistol, as if it went off by accident : you will, thus warned, extinguish the lantern, and hide everything before he comes."

"I will do so. Farewell."

When Marzio returned to the Count's room he found him still in bed, and pretending to be in intense pain. Marzio saw, and not without surprise, on either side of the bed two Dominican friars, with not particularly angelic, or seraphic countenances, which they themselves did not seem to think possessed an air of sanctity, as they kept their hoods drawn down over their eyes. The Count ordered Marzio to leave the keys and withdraw. After his departure the Count smilingly said :

"Reverend Fathers, did you notice him well ? To-morrow he will start for Rocca Petrella ; your Reverences will wait for him in the place you deem most appropriate, and you will send him to hell, or heaven (I care little which) with two balls in his body—and even four would not be amiss : then you may celebrate two masses for his soul. Meanwhile take this alms ;" and he gave them a purse of gold.

"Sleep in peace, your Excellency, for we will serve you according to your deserts," said one of the friars.

"Predestined souls ! But, in order not to mistake, look at this scarlet mantle ; you will see it either upon your man, or on the saddle."

"Oh, there is no need of that, for I know him."

"Indeed ! And how ?"

"I will tell your Excellency another time, for here in Rome I seem to be walking on burning lava—it burns my shoes."

"Marzio, accompany their Reverences. Fathers, I commend myself to your prayers."

"Peace be with you !"

"Amen !"

Marzio accompanied these friars, whose aspect was so strange as to make one shudder ; he attempted to look under their hoods, but he could not recognize them. When they were about to go out, one of them, turning round, in order to salute with the usual phrase, "Peace be with you," let fall a large knife, which was immediately picked up by Marzio, who, with an humble gesture, presented it to the worthy brother.

"Reverend Father, see, you have dropped your rosary."

"My son, the Lord does not forbid us to defend our lives from the attacks of the wicked ; even saints have done it."

"Of course ! Because, to become saints, there is no need of being martyrs also. On the contrary, Father, instead of scandalizing me, you have edified me, and I devoutly beg your Reverence to listen to the confession of a certain sin which weighs upon my soul."

"In this place ? Now ?"

"Is not every moment good to save a Christian ? Did Jesus reply to those who had recourse to him, 'Come to-morrow ?' Father, do not send me away disconsolate ; you will see that it

is only an affair of a few moments ; enter this lower room, and all will be right."

And so saying, he took him forcibly by the arm, as if to lead him in. The friar did not make any resistance, and, asking his companion to await him a moment, entered with Marzio into the lower room.

" Oh, Grimo, I recognized you, you see," said Marzio, boldly pulling down the friar's hood.

" And I you, Marzio—how you have degraded yourself ! Who would have thought you capable of being reduced to the office of a valet."

" And you a friar ? What business have you here ?"

" I will tell you. But how came you a servant in the Cenci's house ?"

" To kill the Count, the assassin of Annetta Riparella, the girl of Vittana."

" And I to kill, to-morrow, a certain Marzio, who, I think, must be some relation of yours."

" Me ?"

" How right you have guessed ! But I always said that you had great wit in your cranium."

" And you will do it ?"

" I have received the price ; and you know the duty of an honorable assassin."

" In that case, it is but just that I kill you first."

" Not at all ; there is a way to arrange everything. We were old companions in the band of Signor Marco, where we always had honorable examples of virtue ; a dog never eats dog's flesh ; sometimes, in a moment of passion, a blow more or less, which we give each other, does not spoil our friendship ; but we never do it by treachery. This we undertake on account of gentlemen against gentlemen, for they are old enemies of ours. However, when one has received the price of the homicide it is



necessary to fulfill the agreement ; otherwise our trade, as you know as well as I do, would lose credit and customers. I have promised to wait to-morrow upon the road of Rocca Petrella for a man who will either wear a scarlet mantle or have it on the saddle, and kill him. I wait ; he does not go by ; my obligation is fulfilled, and I can return with a good conscience to the forest. How do you like that ?”

“ Eh ! it is not bad. And your companion, who is he ?”

“ He is the son of Trofino, the miller. Just think how big he is grown ! He was in love ; found his *innamorata* talking with a young man of Rieti, and he happened to kill both of them—mere boyish affair. It is about six months since he came upon the highway, and promises well. Now let me go, and keep a sharp eye, for the old fellow is a hound of a good breed.

“ We will try, brother Grimo ; if for nothing else than not to wrong the reputation of our company. But, hear : I have got a notion in my head ; if I should have occasion to need your services (paying you, of course), with this young man of such good promise, where can I find you ?”

“ At the Inn of Acqua Ferrata, where they change mules for Rio Freddo, you will find a deaf and dumb boy, who acts as stable boy ; if you say to him with care, and in the lowest tone you can : ‘ Upon Mount Bove the way is deserted,’ perhaps it may happen that he may hear you, and even answer. At any rate, he will let me know what you want of me. And for the present, *ego te absolvo*.”

The old companions separated better friends than ever. Marzio returned to the Count’s room, who, after having commanded certain little services, which he fulfilled with his accustomed diligence, he said in a kind tone :

“ Marzio, if I hate, it is because others hate me ; nor is it an easy thing to bear this life, for excepting you, all try to ensnare my life, all greedily desire my property. I am alone

against all ; but I have not, like Horatius, a bridge on my shoulders. My children hate me more than any one else ; instigated to this by the two most powerful motives among men : love of revenge and desire of property. One thing troubles me ; my strength fails, my vigorous body grows weak. It is useless to attempt to hide it ; years begin to weigh heavily ; I do not want to be reduced like the lion, and be obliged to bear even kicks from the ass. It is more prudent to leave the theatre before the lights are put out. I have, therefore, decided to retire to Rocca Petrella—an estate which I possess upon the confines of the State. Do you know the way ?”

“ I think so. ‘ Go by Tivoli ; and then, asking the way, one may go to Rome,’ says the proverb.”

“ To-morrow, then, you will set out on horseback, with my letters to the castle-keeper, and you will start for that place. There, as an able and experienced hand, you will superintend the works which I have planned to put the castle in order ; you will have new bolts put on the doors ; in the meanwhile, prepare some rooms for me, and try to make the traces of the fire disappear.”

“ Fire ! you say ? Did the castle get on fire ?”

“ The bandits, whilst it was badly guarded, sacked and burnt it. At that time the band of Signor Marco Sciarra was harboring in the neighboring wood, and wherever his band went by, I tell you, grass never grew again.”

“ But I never heard that the band of Signor Marco ever burned or destroyed.”

“ I got into a quarrel with one of his men for some nonsense, which wasn’t worth the while. Once I took a fancy to a certain peasant girl, a shepherdess, or something of that kind. Would you believe it, Marzio, this girl had the courage to resist me, and to threaten me with the revenge of her husband. As she was a devout worshipper of the blessed Virgin of Tears, I made her entirely like to her holy advocate by planting a knife in her

heart. The husband, or lover, whatever he might have been, took the joke in a serious light, and, aided by his companions, played me the trick of burning my castle."

"In truth he was wrong. What a fool not to understand the honor which the Count did him by falling in love with his peasant girl."

"But so it is, they would not understand it. Now, then, let us throw aside old stories. There is no need that you should take any money with you; the castle-keeper must, by this time, have received the payment of the tenants; only for my sake I would have you take this mantle which I give you, it will shield you from the night dews, of which we must be very careful."

"Does your Excellency's scarlet mantle, trimmed with gold, seem a suitable dress for a poor servant like me? I should look like one of the kings of the East."

"He who gives considers his generosity, not the humility of him who receives; and even barons are made of the same stock. What do you suppose is necessary, in our days of decay, to change a peasant into a Count? A red mantle, and a few thousands of ducats. Titles are now become the indulgences of princes, and with the mixture of low people, they are spoiling true and ancient nobility; one day they will perceive it, and repent of it. To me it matters nothing. In the meanwhile, Marzio, take the mantle, and as to money, you know that Count Cenci possesses enough to change fifteen beggars into Roman Princes, and remember, also, that on condition that my property may not go to my most hated children, I am willing it should be divided among my servants. Then either to-night or to-morrow you will saddle the black colt, which is the strongest among my horses, and start; I will follow you in five or six days. In the meanwhile give me the keys of the subterranean passages; I will provide myself for my rebellious daughter."

Marzio gave them to him without hesitation, but in handing

them to him thought, "Rascally, old man ! you don't know that an old bird like me cannot be caught by chaff?" And he thought this because, as he was a skillful man, he had lost no time, and with some instruments, had altered other keys, so as to fit the locks of the vaults.

He took leave, pretending to prepare himself for the journey; he then, in order to watch the lower rooms, went into the corridor, which led to the gate of the vaults; here he took his valise, examined the bridle, the straps, the saddle, and the weapons, and as if he had found the latter rusty for want of use, began to polish them with oil and emery, being always on the lookout.

Cenci, when he thought it time, persuaded that he should surprise Beatrice with some paper written by her, or received by means of Marzio, cautiously, and stealthily like a cat, moving his body carefully on account of his lameness, endeavored to enter unobserved into the prison of Beatrice. Marzio hardly saw him appear at a distance than he snapped the pistol, which caused a great noise in those close places. The keen Count understood at once the plot; rage was in his heart, but he did not change color, he did not even move an eyelid; by this sign Beatrice was warned, and the surprise was in vain. He drew near to Marzio, and in a hypocritical tone said: "Be careful, my boy, another time, for you might wound your hand."

"Oh, it was a mere accident. I should not care about being mutilated for life. Allow me, however, to congratulate you, seeing your leg is so much better, as to let you leave your bed."

"Those good religious men, whom you saw, brought me a relic able to work this, and other miracles; but I did not permit them to disturb the saints in heaven: I stand modestly by my mallows plaster. I feel far from well, however. The need of taking a little air, the insupportable ennui of keeping my room,

induced me to come so far. Marzio, give me your arm, that I may take some fresh air in the garden."

Marzio gave him his arm, so that in seeing them one would have thought them to be the most affectionate master and servant, that were ever seen in the world.

"Are your parents living, Marzio?"

"I am an orphan; I may have some relatives, but it is a long time since I have heard of them."

"Perhaps your heart retains some trace of an old love?"

"Love! I had it once, but the wind blew it out."

"Indeed! Tell me how it happened."

"It is a short story. A powerful baron fell in love with her; she was so imprudent as to refuse the honor the baron was doing her; the baron killed her, and paid her according to her merits."

"A cause, perhaps, of fifteen days of tears. Time easily heals these wounds."

"Not all of them. In some of them the knife breaks, the flesh grows over it, but the wound still bleeds."

"Marzio, the comedy of life is not composed of one act only. Have you seen garlands of a single flower? Be comforted; you are young, you are handsome; once more, twice, and even ten times, you may lead to the joyous dance about the May trees, the handsome girls. I don't wish that your superintendence of the works at the castle should occupy you so much, that you may not be able to make an excursion to your home, which, if I remember rightly, is Tagliacozzo, to find there some smile of life, which may dissipate every cloud of the smile of Death."

"I will do so, Count Cenci; since you give me leave, I will try, as they say, to chase away one devil with another."

Eternal God! while they were exchanging such courtesies, the heads of both, as under the same yoke, were loaded with



the thoughts of their mutual homicide. The Count, after a short walk, again beginning to complain of his lame foot, desired to be reconducted to his room ; and Marzio accompanied him, and helped him with affectionate care.

During the night, when it seemed to Marzio that all slept in the palace, with hasty steps he descended into the garden ; here he made fast to the inclosure a ladder, then opening with his false keys the gates of the vaults, he liberated Olimpio. He, with food and rest, had recovered all his strength, and with it the keen desire of revenge ; and he had planned to set fire to the Cenci palace before abandoning it. Marzio had as much as he could do to prevent him, telling him to be quiet now, that he also was more desirous of revenge ; in a few days he would have a more easy and a sure way of killing the Count, and it was wrong to injure so many innocent ones on account of one wicked.

Then he went to the prison of Beatrice, and advised her to fly with him, but found her firm in her design of bearing all that Providence was willing to send her. Failing to persuade her, he took the letter, comforted her as well as he could, and tried to leave her. He returned ; he felt his heart breaking in abandoning her. Finally, he kissed and rekissed her hands affectionately (she always conjuring him for God's sake to give up his design of revenge against her father), and then went off with excited steps, exclaiming : " Fatal ! fatal !"

Olimpio saved himself by means of the ladder in the garden, Marzio went out of the palace, mounted upon the black colt, carrying upon the saddle a red mantle trimmed with gold.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE TIBER.

Acque del Tebro, a voi sola è rimasta  
La grandezza di Roma.

ANFOSSI, *Beatrice Cenci*.

Fu di Romolo la gente  
Che il tridente  
Di Nettuno in man gli porse.  
Ebbe allor del mar lo impero,  
Ed altero  
Trionfando il mondo corse.

GUIDO, *Il Tevere*.

For several days the home of Giacomo Cenci in vain waited its master. Luisa, although still excited by passion, yet felt the force of her anger against him decline: as at the lulling of the wind the heavy waves continue to strike the shore menacingly in appearance, but without danger to the sailors. Pride governed this Roman lady; yet, notwithstanding this passion, she was not able to hide in silence the great affection which she felt for her husband. The treacherously generous words of Count Cenci, that a good wife should, with all her power, try to reconduct to the right path the truant husband, against his expectations, came into her mind as rules of duty, and as a reproach; and then she thought that either Giacomo had let pass from his heart all affection for her and for their children, or some great misfortune had happened to him; nor did one idea sting her more painfully than the other; and although both things could

not have happened, yet both wounded her, for thus does the suspense of uncertainty grieve. To divert her grief, as best she could, she took extraordinary care of her children ; she hardly ever left them ; the baby she would often carry to her bosom, and cover him with such impetuous kisses, that, frightened, he would cry. But too often the caresses of the elder ones, their smiles, and even the tears of her infant, caused her mind to turn elsewhere, and sometimes, also, involuntary tears bathed her cheeks. Although she persisted in believing Angiolina the first cause of the evil which oppressed her, nevertheless, by her most generous nature, she did not at all relax her charity towards her. While these conflicting thoughts agitated her, one evening the door of the house turned softly on its hinges, and Giacomo suddenly appeared.

He did not utter a word, saluted no one ; he sat at the farther end of the table opposite his wife, covering his face with both his hands. We have already seen him miserable, and badly clothed ; and yet now, how changed from what he was ! His beard and hair were in disorder ; his hat stained with mud ; his clothes unclean, his eyes bloodshot, and a circle of an ashy color about them. Luisa felt, at the same time frightened, and compassionate. As we may have observed at times, our attention overcome by the fullness of grief, fixes itself upon a particular object, and is afflicted more by this than by the general motives, so Luisa, seeing his hands and cuffs very dirty, felt her heart break into a deep sigh.

She took up the little child and carried it to her bosom ; as a messenger shows from a distance, whence his voice cannot reach, an olive branch, or waves a white emblem in sign of peace. All this could not attract the attention of Giacomo ; who believing himself betrayed, deeply absorbed, wept over his buried hopes, happiness and love. All at once starting, and grasping his hair with his hands, he exclaimed, with a harsh voice :

"What have I come here for? Would that one could cast out from his heart his affections, like the cargo of a ship, to save it from shipwreck! but if he cannot cast them out, he may uproot from his breast both his affection and heart. All can be silent at once, and keep silent." He started to go.

Luisa, with a voice neither soft nor severe said :

"Will the father go away from his children without kissing them?"

"Where are they, and who are my children? Which of these children can say that he is born from me? All is founded upon faith: a very fragile glass! How can I trust to the tongue of a deceitful woman, whose words are snares set to lead to villainess and death?"

Luisa knew not what to understand from these words, and stood as if out of her mind. Giacomo, with a bitter smile, added :

"I understand that a man, as I am, incapable of providing for the subsistence of his own family, a sterile stock, gnawed by insects, which breathes from all its pores a curse—useless and fatal, must inspire contempt—and I understand also, and feel that contempt kills love and begets hatred. But why should one justify misdeeds with audacity? Why convert one's own fault into a stone, to throw at the innocent? It would have been enough, I think, to have insulted me, covered me with shame, without perfidiously scattering a storm of bad words, which like dust blinded my eyes, and prevented me from seeing your guilt."

"Giacomo, to whom are you speaking?"

"Be quiet, I have not come here to curse you; but only to tell you that you have been able to put desperation into my soul, but not to deceive me. Now these words are enough—now, that they are expanded like the smoke of an extinguished flame—all has been said between us," and again he made a motion to depart.

"Giacomo, do not go ; by the faith of an honorable man, do not go. When words, like the cloud which contains the thunderbolt, carry in their obscurity the destruction of a person's reputation—oh ! then it is necessary to explain them. Do you suppose that the secret is yours alone, when you have given me to understand that it concerns my dishonor ?"

"It seems to me that you have no right to say so, for my words may sound obscure to every one else but you. Do you wish a comment to my text ? Very well ; here it is ready. How did this furniture come to you ? Who provides this abundance of provisions, not only necessary, but superfluous, for support ? In this house, it is true, I left misery, and I find abundance ; but I left also another thing, which I seek in vain, it is my honor. Should not the poverty or wealth of his family come from the father ? Who are the stewards who have reaped for you ? Whose is the treasury whence you took the money ? Certainly it was not your husband's. What is the name of him who provides for your need, and that of these children ? Where is the courteous gentleman hidden, who takes better care of you than I did ? Why is the friend of my family afraid to show his face to me ?"

"Giacomo, for your honor's sake, remember that you are insulting the mother in the presence of her children."

"But they, what are they but witnesses, who criminate you more than my words ?"

"A relative of yours—and mine—helped me. I cannot tell his name, because I promised to be silent. I am strong enough to see my children starved to death, rather than fed by shame. These suspicions do not touch me, and I wish you to know, Giacomo, that I am as pure as your mother, who is in heaven."

"But, tell me, what could you have alleged against the faith of your husband, except the perfidious calumny of a person who concealed his name ; and nevertheless you refused belief to my

oaths and tears? Now, how can you expect that I should give credit to your bare assertions? Even not a few secret warnings were given me, but I did not listen to them; I stand to facts, which you do not, nor dare deny. Now, I will not say with what justice or sense you pretend that you may believe calumnious words, while you refuse the oath of your lord and husband, yet I must receive your oath in justifying evident and confessed facts."

"Giacomo—of that with which I reproach you I have manifest proofs in my hands; proofs which it is impossible to doubt—your suspicions are infamous—go."

"Very well. I have neither the heart nor the breath to quarrel with you."

After this, without menace, and horribly calm, he approached her, asking in a low voice:

"Could I know certainly if any one of them is my child?"

"Giacomo, you have spoken a foolish word. All are your children."

"Yes, certainly, so it is said. *Pater est quem justæ nuptiæ demonstrant*; thus, at least, is declared by the civil law, which was invented just here in Rome; and the court would condemn me to pay for their support. I am a father, but by a presumption of right; I am a father, but good only to be given to the wild beasts. Too bad that these spectacles of the Flavian theatre are no longer in fashion. No matter; beams, trees, wells, rivers, are everywhere found." His voice became more animated, to the paleness of his cheeks came a feverish flush, and he continued:

"I could revenge myself! But did revenge ever have the virtue of restoring lost happiness? Being miserable, I could render you so—that is all. My food in my lifetime has been sufficiently bitter to make me hate to dip it in blood. No—no—I do not wish to revenge myself—I will rather take myself from your path of life, like the trunk of a tree in the middle of the road—so that you may go where your heart calls you. I do not

ask you to remember me, because I do not care ; and you would do wrong ; nor shall I ask you to forget me, because I care even less about that ; and this you can easily do by yourself. Grief for the dead lasts until the tears are dry, and these are soon dried ; for husbands one rarely weeps. But I have loved these beings ; I have believed them part of myself, and it grieves me now to be obliged to tear them from my affection—I recommend them to you, Lady Luisa—if I cannot consider them my own, remember that they are yours. Certainly, in this last hour, it would have been a great comfort to me to touch my lips to a forehead that was of my own blood. My tears now will be shed for no one ; they will return to weep upon my heart—bitter—grievous—but short. Farewell—I desire that your years may pass without remorse, and with a new husband worthy of your fidelity.”

Luisa had not dared to embitter the ravings of Giacomo with words of dispute or rebuke. Now, observing how weak his voice was, and almost weeping,

“ Oh, my children ! embrace him—make him feel that he is your father,” she said, in anguish, addressing the children.

The children, obedient to the maternal words, moved at once. One seized the hem of his garment, and tried to draw him towards their mother ; another embraced his knees, and another strove to ascend a chair to be able to embrace his neck. Giacomo, somewhat soothed, broke loose from them, exclaiming :

“ Repair to the bosom of your mother, unhappy ones ! Do you not know that the Cenci poison with their breath ? Farewell—farewell forever !”

And he disappeared. The sound of his steps was heard rapidly descending the stairs. Luisa rushed to the balcony, and with a most lamentable voice exclaimed :

“ Giacomo ! Giacomo !”

Again and again she cried ; but Giacomo fled in the power



of the fierce passion which took possession of him. Then, in the courageous woman, love conquered every other feeling, and, throwing on her shoulders a mantle, she broke forth from her house in search of her husband. She had run through several streets, when, partly from fatigue and partly from her anguish, her breath failed, and she was obliged to stop and lean against the wall of a palace. Looking then attentively around, she knew this to be the dwelling of Monsignore Guido Guerra ; she raised her eyes and saw a light. Knowing that this prelate was familiar with the Cenci family, and very intimate with Giacomo, it seemed to her that Providence had almost led her there by the hand ; therefore, gaining more courage, she ascended the steps, and following the valet, without waiting to be announced, entered the room, and found Monsignore in company with two men. The face of one seemed familiar to her, although, at that moment, she could not remember where she had met him ; she hesitated a minute ; but then, urged by painful dismay, said :

“ Oh, Monsignore, you who through your goodness are such an affectionate friend of Giacomo, my husband, alas ! for the sake of Christ, send somebody to seek him through Rome, for he went off from the house in a great passion, and, alas ! I fear with evil intentions.”

“ Against whom, Lady Luisa ?”

“ Against himself ; and I strongly fear that he has taken the way to the Tiber.”

“ Mercy ! Come, Marzio, let us go ; you, with some of my servants, on the left ; I with some others, on the right of the river. Olimpio, you accompany Lady Luisa.”

Omitting any leave-taking, Guido, Marzio, and the servants, rushed out of the house in search of Giacomo. Lady Luisa, taking the arm of Olimpio, began to speak :

“ Your face is not new to me ; but, Holy Virgin ! my brain is so disturbed that my memory wanders—Ah ! yes—I remem-

ber now—you were at the fire of the house of the carpenter of Ripetta.”

“I?”

“Yes, and were one among those who worked to help the powerless ones.”

“I have done nothing but evil. To you illustrious lady, all the merit is due; you are a saint, God bless you! If the question is not impertinent, will you tell me why you were disguised on that cursed night? Why did you run such a desperate risk?”

“I will tell you while we go. The woman whom I saved, has wounded my heart; she has filled my family with mourning; truly it was not very happy before, but not so desolate; for where love rules hope never leaves. That which God has ordered man never to sever, her hand has divided forever; in short, she has stolen my husband; and on that night I wandered there with the intention of the wolf around the barnyard. I longed to drink her blood, and it seemed to me that this alone could have quenched my rage. Desperate cries reached me, the woman appeared with the child in her arms at the window; I saw no longer the hated rival, I saw only the mother. I thought of my children, and rushed to save her, because Christ spoke within my heart, and said: ‘Pardon!’”

Olimpio, hearing lady Luisa speak thus, turned red and pale. He searched within his soul to see if there was any room left for a hope of mercy, and he thought of none. Then he groaned from the depth of his heart, as the chains of the prisoner fall back with desperate noise after his utmost efforts to break them. Nevertheless, by the side of the flame of charity there is no heart, although of granite, that is not warmed. Olimpio, in spite of himself, felt moved. “If I,” he began to say, “if I could hope that absolution could save me, I would confess my sins to none but you, revered lady, and between God and my-

self, I would not desire to place a better mediator than you. But I have so filled the book of my life with crimes, that the Guardian Angel could not find so much blank space left as to write the word *mercy* even with the finest feather of his wings. Patience ! and, nevertheless, I will confess this, because if my confession cannot avail me, it will avail you, and hence I do it. Do you know who burned that house ? I."

"You !"

"Do you know who brought to your noble husband the calumniating and perfidious letter which, perhaps, dragged him to despair ! I. Do you know who has conceived all this, in order that you and your husband should hate each other ?—Count Francesco Cenci. He rubbed his hands joyfully, and said : 'It is more easy for a rock split by the thunderbolt to join again, than my daughter-in-law to return to her love for Giacomo. I have sowed hatred, they will reap desolation.'"

Lady Luisa impetuously let go the arm of Olimpio, and ran so swiftly that she might have outstripped the deer in her flight ; and reaching home, she rushed into the room where the poor Angiolina still lay ill, and, approaching her bed breathlessly and with anguish, asked : "Woman, by the love you bear your God, beware of telling a lie. Do you know Count Cenci !"

Angiolina, frightened at seeing her, and not recognizing her on account of the change in her clothes, for she had always appeared before her in man's apparel, answered :

"Who are you ? What do you wish of me ?"

"I do not answer ; I ask," imperiously added Lady Luisa, "tell me if you know Count Cenci ?"

"But you—are, perhaps, the sister of my benefactor ?"

"What matters that to you ?" exclaimed Lady Luisa, striking impatiently one foot upon the ground ; "either man, woman, or demon, do not ask of her who saved your life. Answer—answer," and she kept striking the pavement with her feet.

Angiolina, as under the influence of a painful dream, said :

"Yes, I know him."

"You know him, eh? miserable one, and this is the son of your loves?"

And, so saying, she thrust her hand into the hair of the little child, who, feeling pain, began to scream.

"Don't touch him. In what has this poor child offended you?"

And in order to protect him she half-raised herself in her bed

"This is the child of sin, and you had him from Cenci."

"From Cenci, lady?" continued Angiolina, bursting into tears, "is it becoming in a lady thus to tear the reputation of a poor sick woman? I, yes, I know an old baron who is called Count Don Francesco Cenci; it was he who was the benefactor of my poor dead husband, who took me once to thank him; he wished to give me money, which I unwillingly accepted, because, in spite of his white hair and mild words, there sparkled something in his eyes that frightened me; I never saw him more than once."

"Not of him—I am not asking of him, but of his son, Giacomo."

"I seem to have heard that Count Cenci had children, but I never saw them, nor do I know how they are named," and she gave this answer with such simple tranquillity, that even the apostle of doubt himself, St. Thomas, would have believed her.

"Never saw him? You don't know his name? Swear it on your God's name; swear it on your soul and conscience; swear it on this Redeemer, who, if you were a perjurer, know that he would unnail His hands from the cross to curse you forever."

And taking a crucifix from the bed, she placed it before her eyes. Angiolina took it, kissed it devoutly, then she returned it with a gesture full of sweetness, saying :

"Are you a mother, lady?"

"Had I not been a mother, should I have had the courage to rush into the flames to save you and your son?"

"You? And what is your name?"

"Lady Luisa."

"Wife?"

"Of Giacomo Cenci."

"Ah, lady! although I am a woman of little understanding, still I comprehend that wicked tongues must have invented some scandal about me. Now, listen to me. Holy is the name of God, that of the Redeemer Holy, our souls and consciences are holy things, but I will not swear upon those." And placing her hand on the breast of the dear child, who lay in a cradle by the side of her bed, she continued: "if I have spoken words of falsehood, may this heart of my heart cease at this moment to palpitate under my hand."

Luisa, as if beside herself, exclaimed:

"I believe you—ah! I believe you;" and leaning over Angiolina, she took her face between her hands, and kissed her on her hair, cheeks, and neck, without noticing how these motions pained her, not being yet fully cured. Angiolina, by an instinct of gentle virtue, could scarcely repress the sighs of pain, caused by these raving caresses.

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Giacomo Cenci, the first fury passed which made him abandon his house with so much passion, strode slowly away. He had come to the decision of destroying himself, not by the impetus of passion, but by cool deliberation. He reached the Tiber, and with his head and shoulders bent down, he fixed his eyes on it, and saw, or it seemed to him he saw arise from the deep the beautiful form of a woman, either naiad, mermaid, or water

nymph ; she appeared beautiful, and indistinct like our image when we approach the agitated water ; and coming nearer grows more distinct. Her hair was blue, descending on her cheeks and bosom, dripping sparkling drops like the iris which emanates from gems ; her face was of a pearl color, from her sea-green eyes issued glances which painfully attracted the eyes of Cenci and dazzled them ; and still he could not remove them from her, for a bitter pleasure, and a delightful pain keenly forced him to stare at her. From her coral lips, as movable as his eyes were still, issued a sound that warbled sweetly over the waters, like notes of a lyre ; a sound which Ulysses knew not how to conquer except by closing his ears with wax.

“ Welcome,” she murmured, “ welcome the secret friend of my heart : I am fresh ; come and cool the burning of thy feverish limbs ; come, I will give you to drink refreshing water, which is not drawn from terrestrial fountains ; the waters of Lethe which begets oblivion. If you wish to sleep I will prepare for you in my bosom a bed of weeds, so soft as to infuse sleep into the bodies of those who know no rest ; here below in the deep you will dwell in palaces of crusted carbuncles of sapphire ; under the vaults of these waters the icy breath of winter never bites, nor the burning Sirio enervates ; here below we live delightfully listening to the secret murmur that moves from things, which are formed and unformed continually in the bowels of the earth. We, if it please you, my dear one, will ride seated upon the backs of dolphins on the surface of the waters, or will pursue in the deep caverns the fishes that fly, and the others that defend themselves with the sword or the saw ; I will teach you to glide over the surface of the waves, and to palpitate with pleasure in the waters amidst which the rays of the moon penetrate, and agitate them with phosphoric ripple. I come near to you, you draw near to me. Uncourteous one ! I, you see, I stretch out my arms ; fate forbids me to pass the confines of the waters : I



await you here ; here we will meet ; and here will I kiss you."

The unhappy man feels a shudder in his bones ; his feet become like feathers, his head lead ; he anxiously seeks the lips of the mermaid, he cleaves the air, touches the water, and kisses her. The mermaid raises her dripping arms, clasps him, and encloses him in her embrace.

The following day upon the desolate shore, among the weeds of the sand, will be found a swollen corpse, his hair, eyes, and mouth full of blood : his skin the color of the sea-herbs : his eyes, although extinguished, seem still to seek something, nor is it possible to make them close : he seems dead in pleasure—truly the kiss of the mermaid has brought death to him.

But Giacomo Cenci, upon the point of taking the fatal leap, was strongly held on the parapet by two hands, and a familiar voice cried :

" Madman ! what would you do ?"

Giacomo, astonished, raised his head a moment, and then leaned back again towards the Tiber. Every song had ceased ; the voices were silent, the beautiful face of the mermaid had disappeared. Then his mind, which had rushed even to the extreme limit of the infinite, returned with abhorrence to the usual offices of life, and he saw and knew his friend Guido Guerra.

" Oh ! Guido."

" Miserable man !" continued Monsignore Guerra, between pitying and reproaching, " and your children ?"

Giacomo shrugged his shoulders, and answered not a word ; he, exhausted, allowed himself to be led like a man without any will ; only when he noticed that he was placing his foot on the threshold of his house, turning to Monsignore Guerra he said :

" Guido, if you suppose that I ought to thank you, you deceive yourself. At this moment, if you had not prevented it, I should have read the *laus Deo* of life, shut the book, and known

how it ended : not well, certainly, not well ; but as it might end worse, I should have been contented. No, I cannot thank you, even at the risk of appearing ungrateful."

On entering the house, a strange sight presented itself to him. A man of sinister appearance, stout as the Farnese Hercules, holding in his arms the youngest of Giacomo's children, held him suppliantly towards him.

This refinement of feeling was natural, when expressed by Lady Luisa, a loving mother ; but how it entered the mind of Olimpio, a wicked and savage nature, cannot be comprehended. Once the bees placed the honeycomb in the mouth of a wild beast, but it was such an extraordinary thing, that Samson made it the subject of an enigma for the Philistines.

But this idea availed Olimpio ; who, holding the child as a plank of safety, earnestly confessed to Giacomo all his crimes committed by order of Count Cenci for the purpose of destroying their domestic peace. In the meanwhile, the child from time to time raised his little hands, and sweetly smiled, so that Giacomo could not get angry with Olimpio ; who, taking the opportunity, placed the child in the hands of the father, adding :

" Now, since with your son, I have restored your peace, for the sake of this innocent being, who intercedes for me, I pray you, sir, pardon me."

Giacomo was silent, and turned his eyes around suspiciously, still disquieted ; but Lady Luisa, guessing the meaning of that dumb language, drew Olimpio aside, and kneeling before her husband, said :

" My husband, we have mutually doubted each other's faith. It will be a sufficient excuse for me to remember that Eve could not guard herself from the perfidious tongue of the serpent ; she being formed by the hands of the Creator, we must suppose to be made more perfect than us. Having known the wicked end at which Count Cenci aimed, and considering the hypocritical

and wicked arguments urged by him, I feel myself free from my sworn promise, and I declare to you that, moved by despair, I went to him, exposed the state of our family, and prayed him to help my desolate children, who were of his blood. His words and acts were those of a loving father ; he narrated to me, credulous with passion, a long story of your loves, and the money lavished in dissipation, and denied to the children ; and helped me affectionately with three hundred ducats, on condition that I should never reveal whence they came ; thus, with perfidious design, he made me believe you lost in dissipated vices ; and you, that with the reward of shame I had procured comforts for myself and our children."

The lady had spoken until now with such vehemence and rapidity, that Giacomo had not been able to interrupt her. Here, however, he cut short her words, saying :

" This position is not becoming the wife of Giacomo Cenci. Rise, Luisa, your place is here, on my heart, on the heart of your Giacomo, who has loved you, and who loves you so much."

They embraced, and wept tears of joy. Let them shed them freely and sweetly. Who knows whether fortune will ever again offer them the occasion to weep for joy ?

The children, although yet young, for the eldest had scarcely reached his seventh year, wept also for joy, and exultingly grouped themselves with most loving aptitude, some around the father, some around the mother. Monsignore Guerra and Marzio, although pressed by the urgent need of putting into execution a certain scheme of their own, dared not disturb the sanctity of the domestic affections. Olimpio, seated with his back to the wall, had again taken possession of the beautiful little child, and fondly caressed him. Truly, he was extremely beautiful ; he resembled the child Jesus, sleeping on a cross, painted by Albano ; and the son of Giacomo Cenci resembled this picture of Albano's for another reason, for hardly was he born, than for-

tune placed him upon a bitter cross, as those who will continue the reading of this sad history will know.

The bandit looking in this pure white face, vainly endeavored to recollect the days in which, when a child, he awakened, perhaps, in the souls of those who looked at him a like affection. When they took the child from him to replace it in the cradle, he seemed to have lost the last plank with which he had trusted to save himself from shipwreck.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE DEPARTURE.

GIACOMO CENCI, having been invited to dinner by Monsignore Guerra, returned home late the following night ; and if his long delay troubled Lady Luisa, his arrival did not console her ; for he appeared pensive and sad : he refused to see the children—he even refrained from kissing the baby, as he was wont ; at its crying also he looked disturbed. In bed tormenting dreams afflicted him, and he was heard to cry in his sleep : “ he is dead ! he is dead ! ” He awoke, suddenly frightened, casting uneasy glances around, and seeing his wife by his side, clasped her in a warm embrace as if overcome by internal passion, and exclaimed with tears :

“ How much better it would have been, if I had ceased to live ! ”

“ You repent, then, of having returned to the bosom of your family, which adores you ! ” replied his wife, affectionately.

“ No, Luisa, no ; may God forbid ; yet, believe me, it would have been better if I were dead—and you will see why.”

Luisa, like a discreet woman, was silent, attributing this anxious trouble to past emotions ; and she trusted that time, her cares, and the caresses of the children would restore peace to his agitated mind.

On that same night, Marzio and Olimpio departed from Rome provided with much money. They rode two powerful horses ;

and although they travelled without suspicion of meeting any impediment in their way, yet they were furnished with fire-arms.

A few days after, Count Cenci being in better health, his foot sufficiently recovered, one morning, at dawn, awoke the family suddenly, and ordered, that dressed as they were, they should set out on a journey. In the court-yard Beatrice saw horses already harnessed, a carriage and guides in readiness—a manifest indication of a long journey. Where their father would take them, how long he would remain from Rome, was what neither she nor any one of the family dared to ask.

Cenci had provided for everything with his usual care. As it did not appear safe for him to venture with his family alone through the dangerous roads, which led from Rome to Rocca Petrella, he had hired for several days a band of rural guards, in order to protect him on the road. Formerly he had travelled over the fifty-eight miles, which lay between the city and his estate, in a single day ; but now he could not depend upon doing it, considering on one hand, the weight of the carriage, and on the other, roads thick with dust, or broken with hills, and the great heat of the season. The Count had ordered to be put in the carriages linen, silver, provisions, and wines of several sorts, among which was a flask of Xeres bearing the date 1550 upon its label, recommending them to take particular care of it.

Beatrice, the first to enter the carriage, turning to the Count, said :

“ My lord and father, I must speak to you.”

“ Silence ?”

And Beatrice, raising her hands entreatingly towards him, exclaimed again :

“ Father, hear me, for the love of God—your life is ”——

But Count Cenci, thinking these were mad attempts to free herself from the hated journey, pushed her into the carriage,



locked the door, and ordered the curtains to be quickly pulled down.

Having given the signal for departure, Count Cenci mounted with the others on horseback, and all started *en route* without saying a word. The company looked more like a procession for some illustrious dead person, than a travelling cavalcade. They went out of the gate of St. Lorenzo, and keeping always to the Tiburtina road, they reached Tivoli.

From Tivoli, following the Valerian road, they arrived at Vicovaro, where, on account of the intense heat and hard roads, they were obliged to stop ; with what rage to the Count, who vainly tried to urge them forward, cannot be described. The tired horses would neither obey whip nor spur. In the afternoon they resumed their journey, and reached the inn of Ferrata, where it was necessary to leave the carriages, and ascend the mountain upon horses or mules. Count Cenci dismounted, called the innkeeper, and asked him if mules had been sent from Rocca Petrella to carry them.

"I have seen no mules," replied the host, with an ill-natured look.

"But has not my servant named Marzio stopped here in passing?"

"I know nothing of Marzio, and I have seen neither March nor April."

Count Cenci had artfully put this question to find out if Marzio had been murdered, and to feign in every respect ignorance of the homicide ; but since the innkeeper knew nothing, he thought it best to pretend great anger, and he cursed Marzio, and the carelessness of servants generally in fulfilling the orders of their masters, seeming perplexed how to procure means for travelling ; the host, always cross according to the custom of the Roman innkeepers, observed to him :

"Your Excellency, what is the use of getting angry ? When

you have cursed all the saints in Heaven, have you made horses and mules come ? If your lordships take from us the privilege of swearing, by my faith, I do not know what you will leave to us poor vassals. Your servant has not found them probably ; he may have fallen sick at the castle ; he may not have thought that you would arrive so soon ; the bandits may have murdered him by the way, and I know not what else may have detained him ! So many accidents happen in this world ! Every evil has its remedy. Leave me to act. You know that host comes from *hospes* ; and if Fortune had not looked askance at me, I would lodge people according to the commands of the Apostles."

"I thought," replied the Count, smiling, "that host was derived from another word."

"From what ?"

"From *hostis*, which, in the Latin language, means enemy ; but perhaps I am mistaken. Now, let us hear what you intend to do, my host."

"We will send this boy up into the woods where the coalmen are. At this hour the coal-pits must have been made ; so that the workmen, partly out of courtesy to me, and partly to gain a few crowns, will be willing to come down here, and carry you to Rocca Petrella. It will be necessary for you to travel all night because it is a good distance ; more or less it must be nearly thirty miles."

"The road is like that to Heaven, which should be made wider to accommodate us poor sinners. At all events, the moon rises late, and will facilitate the ascent and descent."

"But why do you not wait till to-morrow ? Here I can find means to accommodate you all—remember we have only one neck to break !"

"No, I must get there immediately."

"And beside, to-morrow early you will have horses that will suit you."

"No, send for the mules of the coalmen."

"I will do as you please, your Excellency, even mules can carry one home."

A dark-complexioned boy, with falcon eyes, was sitting on a wood-pile, as contented as if he were on a velvet cushion. His aspect indicated such idiocy that it would have deterred any one from asking a service of him. The Count, staring at him disdainfully, said :

"Did you hear ? By this time you ought to be a mile off."

"Do not trouble yourself, your Excellency, for it would be breath wasted. The poor creature cannot understand you, he has been deaf and dumb from his birth, but with four winks I will dispatch him."

The Count, thinking he was laughed at, was about to give a sad warning to the traitorous host, which he would recollect all his lifetime ; but that the latter began to make signs with his hands, which the boy appeared to understand, except that he yawned, stretching his arms, and with other movements, showed a repugnance to depart. The innkeeper, however, to end the matter, added to his orders by taking him by the right ear, and dragging him down from the wood-pile, gave him a most decisive blow which sent him rolling against the door. From all this the boy certainly could understand that it was a question of a matter of importance.

Having put the horses in the stable, they unloaded the carriages, making ready the packages and ropes to bind them to the backs of the mules. The ladies and Bernardino were shown into a chamber on the first floor, and there shut up. The Count, wandering around suspiciously, watched everything.

The boy ran a long distance up a by-path : here he stopped, turned towards the inn, and shook his fist at it like an angry ape ; then leaping, he ran like a goat up the side of Mount St. Elia, which leads from Ferrata to Rio Freddo.

The ascent, difficult from the first, became rough, and finally precipitous. The boy had not relaxed his speed, but springing from rock to rock, he appeared rather to fly than to run. Let us leave him on his way, as he knows the road, and certainly will not lose himself.

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Where Mount St. Elia is most rugged, under the aged oaks which broadly spread their branches above the trees of minor growth, burned a large fire. Upon these heights the air stings sharply like that of a September night, although upon the plains the heat was suffocating ; and the men who stood around it in different attitudes had lighted it to see each other and for the sake of company. Just then they looked as if the trees had rained ennui upon their heads ; for some were lying down whistling, holding both hands under their heads, their hats drawn over their faces, and one leg thrown carelessly across the other ; others, wrapped in great cloaks, turned now here, now there, heaving occasionally a deep sigh ; often they yawned simultaneously in chorus.

"Is there any danger that Marzio wishes to convert us ?" asked one bandit.

"I do not know what Marzio intends to do," replied another, "but for my part I mean to stay here, according to the contract, till to-morrow, then by St. Nicholas, I shall desert with arms and baggage."

"Only send to us upon these mountains a ration of wine ! Look, all the flasks are dead upon the ground. I would rather see a policeman than an empty flask."

"And then even to take the dice from us !"

"They are cruelties to make even a Nero weak."

"I am almost tempted to tell my beads. What do you say to it, Orazio?"

"It will do to pass away the time. But you are very wrong to complain, because to-morrow our engagement will end, and if, in the meantime, nothing new happens, I imagine that this will be the first money gained without remorse, as it is without danger."

"Orazio was a tall bandit of grave aspect, and although in the decline of life, still quite handsome. His brow and heart bore the marks of every passion, yet now they were extinguished, but the still warm ashes gave witness to the smouldering flame. The scabbard had lasted longer than the blade. Orazio had outlived himself. Until then he had stood leaning against an elm tree, with his head resting upon his knees, without uttering a word. They called him the bandit-poet, the physician, and the legislator of the band. When questioned, he replied; when asked, he advised; when invited, without being too much urged, he would sing songs composed by himself, or relate strange incidents of foreign lands; otherwise, he was always taciturn, he seemed meditating upon the chances which had befallen him, for certainly fortune had given to him many and various ones in former times. A fantastical spirit, a lover of the marvellous, which he often met without seeking for it. If he had lived in the times when three or four murders did not hurt one, with the strength of his arm, and the valor of his songs, he would have obtained fame in Provence over any minstrel or baron devoted to the service of the ladies; now, misery, which had given rust to his clothes, the old habit of deciding quarrels by the knife which he carried by his side, and, in short, his natural genius had led him to the woods. Such was Orazio.

"But the ennui, Orazio, do you consider the ennui nothing.

"I count it a great deal; but it is the hair-cloth attached

to the lives of all. Emperors and Popes wear it sewed between their shirt and their flesh ; and are you not willing to support it for four or six nights ? We were paid, and well paid, and this which we have to bear is not too much labor. Would that it had always happened thus to me, then I would not have been at the age of twenty with white hair !”

“ How white ? have you not a black beard ?”

“ But my hair is white.” And here Orazio raised a kind of cap, which wholly covered his head close to his ears, and for the first time the bandits saw that he had not a hair which did not resemble silver thread ; his eyes, brows, and his beard, however, had remained very black. “ I have been grey since twenty.”

“ Lord bless us,” exclaimed an old robber, “ you are not any relation to the devil ?”

“ Not that I know of ; no.”

“ There is some witchcraft in it,” said the others, frightened.

“ By your leave, the devil has nothing to do with it : but a grey eagle.”

“ Oh, what do you mean by an eagle ?”

And they all gathered around him. Orazio, with his head uncovered, and enjoying the fright of his companions, who did not cease to look with wonder mingled with terror on his white hair and black beard, began to speak :

“ I will tell it to you ; in the absence of wine, a story will at least please you better than water ; is it not true ? My father, a woodman, died as he had lived, as poor as St. Quintino, who called the people to mass by sounding tiles instead of bells. My mother, after his death, had not an hour of comfort, and, poor woman, fell sick with palpitation of the heart. The curate, who was a learned man, told us to gather a certain herb called *fu*, which grew on these mountains, press out its juice, and give it to her to drink, for it would do her good ; and we found what he said to be true. But when the candle has burned to



its socket, it must be extinguished ; and the old woman died : *requiescat in pace. Amen !*"

And the bandits responded :

*" Requiescat in pace !"*

" In the year of our Lord—wait till I recollect it—in the year that the earthquake levelled the steeple of St. Andrea to the ground—I might have been about twenty years old—on a Friday, I and two brothers of mine went to the forest to cut wood, and to gather a little of the herb *fu*. At twenty years it costs little to climb, and we ascended the precipices of Mount Terminello. Snow always covers the summit, and in these solitudes nothing was heard but the cries and flight of eagles, enraged at not finding food. Having arrived at the very top of the mountain, a human figure appeared before us immovable, as if it were carved in the rock. We thought it was the devil, and crossed ourselves devoutly, according to the rule ; but it remained firm. Candido, the eldest of us, who was no block-head, said, that having resisted the sign of the holy cross it could not have been the devil ; and in fact it was not the devil, but scarcely less than he. This man stood alone upon the summit, looking down at an eagle's nest. We approached him cautiously, for fear that he might be in danger taken thus by surprise, but he did not notice us. I looked at him, mercy ! what malignant eyes ! His countenance seemed painted by envy with the dark green color of hatred. He muttered between his teeth :

" ' They are out of gun-shot, there no one can reach or touch them, and they are as quiet as popes ; their parents will soon return with food, and they will all be happy ; the first ever seen by me, and left happy.'

" Then, turning his head, he perceived us ; we saluted him, and asked what fancy had seized him to venture upon those precipitous heights, and if he did not fear giddiness.

“ ‘Why do you wish to know my secret?’ he replied, with a troubled air. ‘What matter my concerns to you, or yours to me? If you are bandits, I will give you the money which I have about me, and go to the devil that brought you here.’

“ ‘We told him that we were only woodmen and hunters, and it would not have hurt him to have been more polite.

“ ‘Very well; if you do not wish to acquire as kings, you will gain as servants; come here—near me—look there below.’

“ ‘Where?’

“ ‘In the direction of my finger—in that abyss there—the eagle’s nest.’

“ ‘Surrounded by fog, it appeared merely a black speck.

“ ‘Yes; we see it.’

“ ‘And he, pointing still with his finger, added:

“ ‘Which of you feels himself able to bring me the three eaglets?’

“ ‘How do you know,’ I interrupted, ‘that there are three eaglets in the nest?’

“ ‘Because I perceive them distinctly, with their gilded, sorrel feathers.’

“ ‘I thought: ‘if he is not the devil, as Candido has said, at least he must be his relative;’ for I saw then, and I see still, thanks to St. Lucy, like a hunter; yet I was not able to perceive anything but a greyish spot about as large as my fist.

“ ‘The one,’ continued this man, ‘who brings me the three eaglets shall have ten golden ducats.’

“ ‘Ten golden ducats! It was enough for us to buy a kingdom. All wanted to go; but we settled the matter by drawing lots, and the lot fell to me. We unwound the ropes, which we hunters of the mountain were accustomed to wear doubled around our waists, and tied together, they seemed long enough to reach down there; they lowered me; I seized the rope with my left hand, and with my right I grasped my knife, sharper

than a razor ; I reached the nest, tore it away, and secured it under my arm. The eaglets screamed—I was deaf ; they pecked—I let them peck ; I shook the rope, they drew me up, and I began to ascend slowly, like a bucket ; everything went on like enchantment. Having ascended two-thirds, and it might have been three-fourths, of the way, I heard a noise like the air agitated violently by a storm, and desperate cries astounded me. The day became dark, and at the same time two beaks attacked me, one of which tore the skin from my head, and the other pulled off my hat and carried it away ; for the eagles were two, male and female, and, as it appeared, like Gildippe and Odoardo, lover and spouse ; and besides, parents of the eaglets that I was carrying with me. Both wheeled in their flight to attack me anew directly on my head. I had never seen such large eagles. St. Uberto aid me ! When they came near me I aimed desperate blows ; I struck one between the wing and neck, but did not wound him much ; I cut off a quarter of the wing of the other ; but it was nothing. They rose, descended, whirled round, wounding me in the breast, upon the shoulders and sides, darting so quickly at my eyes, with distended claws, that I really began to repent of having descended below ; but I, however, defended myself by revolving, wonderfully swift, my knife all round my body. Imagine a moment, if it must not have been a new sight to see a Christian suspended in the air, turning round like a spindle, with a nest of eaglets under his arm, fencing with the eagles, which with all their fierceness tried to tear me to pieces, and the precipice below filled with the screams of the birds, with human voices, repeated a thousand times by the echo, with feathers flying about, dropping with blood and fury. On looking up, I saw the face of the unknown leaning over the cliff, who laughed, showing his teeth like a hungry wolf ; my eyes were dazzled, and a cold perspiration ran down my back. Holy Virgin ! what horror ! I, in striking blows, had accidentally

cut more than half of the cord which held me suspended. It seemed to me as if my sight was sharpened, and it certainly was; for I could clearly distinguish the threads of the rope giving way, and breaking one by one, and the piercing eyes of the unknown cutting with his eager look the part which remained whole. At that moment I felt as if a heavy blow was struck at my head, my body shrank, my ribs contracted, and I diminished in size. I closed my eyes, and saw fire; I re-opened them, however, very soon, for four powerful claws in my forehead warned me to hasten to defend them, if I did not wish the eagles to snatch them from their nest, as I had done their eaglets. My brothers, fearing I should abandon myself to my fate, knew no other way of aiding me, than to shout, 'Courage, brother! Orazio, be brave!' and giving frightful jerks to the rope, which every moment became weaker.

"I was nearly at the edge of the abyss. I extended one hand to the ridge, threw the nest, and with the other clung convulsively; and it was well I did so; for scarcely had my head appeared, than my brothers let go of the rope, and fled shrieking as if chased by evil spirits; still, as God willed, I was saved, and I threw myself exhausted upon the snow. The unknown, with his glassy eyes, looked at me curiously, and examined my head in silence; he pulled out three or four of my hairs, and put them in the palm of his hand, looking at the same time carefully at them. He placed them between himself and the light, cut them, and finally, laughing, said to me, 'You have been afraid!' My brothers, meanwhile, having recovered from their first fright, advanced, raising their eyes to heaven, and with great difficulty were persuaded that I was the same person as before. My hair, in one instant of agony, was changed from black to snowy white.

"The stranger, with some arguments, gave us to understand that this thing had happened naturally; which reasons I could not comprehend then, and much less could explain to you now.

While he spoke, he drew his poniard from his pocket, and without stopping in his speech, cut off the heads of the eaglets. The eagles, wounded, and with part of their feathers plucked out, did not dare to approach us, who were too many for them, and they had already scented the powder of our guns ; but, from afar, they uttered such desolate cries, that they pierced our hearts. The man, after having cut off the head of the last eaglet, said to us :

“ ‘ Come, my brave fellows, do you wish to gain twice as much money as that which you have had ? Go, and put back these three dead eaglets in the nest from which you have taken them. I have no more money with me, but come to Rocca Petrella, and I, Count Cenci, will redeem my promise to you.’ ”

“ It seemed to us that the day had already been a profitable one enough ; and beside, the eagles, although birds, had suffered too much already. Then the Baron went away, whistling, to another part of the mountain, without giving or awaiting a salute.”

“ And what does all this amount to ? ” said an old bandit, who looked as if born at the same time with Charon of the Sistine Chapel. “ How have you proved that all this did not happen by the work of the devil ? ”

“ But did I not tell you that the baron was Count Francesco Cenci, of Rocca Petrella ? ”

“ A good reason ! Could not the devil have taken the form of Count Cenci ? And, putting the baron out of the question, could not the eagles and eaglets have been devils ? ”

“ But hear me, stubborn fellow ! I have always heard it said that the devil is a mighty lord. How do you suppose that he would trouble himself about such a poor creature as I am ? ”

“ Ah ! one soul weighs as much as another in the balance of the devil.”

“ And twelve make a dozen.”



"But did you, by chance, happen to carry any relic about you?"

"What a question! Of course! I had a brief, with the oration of St. Brancazio against witches; a little fish-horn against spells; the medal of St. Tebaldo, besides a piece of *lumen Christi* in my pocket."

"All this may be sufficient; but the medal of St. Venanzio is necessarily needed by him who goes among the mountains. Remember this, my boys, the Evil One—you understand, Orazio—the Evil One tried to make you die without the sacraments, and to carry you directly to hell; thence, my boys, for I might be a father to you all, understand what a profit it would be to your souls to be near the Holy Mother Church. And then, as I happened to say something about the rosary, would you find it inconvenient, in order to kill time, to recite half-a-dozen of beads? But why do I say inconvenient? Would it not be as much money saved for the next world?"

The old bandit drew from his pocket an image of the Madonna, and fixed it with his knife in the trunk of an oak. He bent his knees, and began to tell his beads with much devotion. His companions, moved either by his example, by true piety, or by a thousand other reasons, which it would be needless to seek, since our actions are influenced, generally, by a number of motives, and not by a single cause, bent their knees and responded to the old man, alternating with a *Pater* and an *Ave Maria*.

If the devil had passed by, he would have fled terrified.

"That is enough, Ghirigoro," said a bandit, rising; and while he rubbed both knees with his hands, he added:

"But you know that your idea about the devil changed into two eagles, comes, by your leave, from your foolishness."

"I foolish? And do you not know, ignorant man, that twenty thousand devils can enter into one bean, and that one devil alone can furnish food to a whole convent of Franciscan



friars ? And do you not know, that to save our souls from the devil, it is not enough to sit upon a fount of holy water and hold an image of Christ in our mouth, for he would find a hole to enter ; nor did it even profit St. Antonio to take him by the nose with a pair of tongs."

" With a pair of tongs ?"

" By the nose ?"

" Just so !" replied the bandit, interrupting ; " exactly, with the tongs, by the nose."

" Oh ! now let us hear this."

" It is as clear as water. Once the devil, to make St. Antonio lose his patience, transformed himself into the stool on which he sat ; the saint came into his cell, and immediately began to read his books of divinity ; the devil went from under him, and the saint was knocked upside down. Another time he changed himself into a writing-desk, and fell upon his nose, breaking his spectacles ; then into a dog, a cat, and a woman, although many believe that when the devil appears in the form of a woman he does not change much ; but that there are really she-devils, or I should say devilesses, I truly believe. Finally, the Evil One did everything that he could devise ; but the holy man, with exemplary patience, took him by the ear, and admonished him : ' Devil, devil, does it seem to you that you can fool a saint like me ? The world is large, and we can both stay in it without troubling each other ; go away with your pranks, and do not bother my head.' Then he would put him out of the cell and shut the door in his face. One day, as our good St. Antonio was preparing a most beautiful little sermon upon the miracle of the bread and fishes, he locked the door for the sake of peace, and put a piece of *lumen Christi* in the key-hole, hoping in this way to have it ; but it was of no use. For at once he heard a gnawing, and he saw the devil, who had pushed his face through a hole in the wall, leering at him. The saint coolly and softly seized the

tongs from the fire-place, and then, in less time than you could say 'Amen,' rushed upon the devil and took him by the nose. The devil screamed—but the saint was firm. The devil, although seized by the tongs, did transform himself, first, into a lion as large as Mount Terminello ; then into a serpent a mile long ; but he could not escape, and the saint held him tight, until he had drowned him in a pitcher of alcohol, as I saw with my own eyes, and verified at the fair of Tagliacozzo, where a monk of most holy life showed it to me, and told me that the devil, before being extinguished in the spirituous holy water, had been a half hour and more fizzing like red-hot iron."\*

"How ! You saw a serpent a mile long ?"

"The devil had retained the last form which he had taken in his transformations. That of the serpent was not the last."

"Then, what form had he ?"

"That of a mole, two hands long, the tail included."

A tremendous burst of laughter broke forth from all the band, which somewhat disconcerted the old man. He flew into a passion, wrapped himself in his great cloak, muttering :

"You are heretics already ; and one of these days you will see what it is to be bandits without a little religion."

\* This miracle was not really worked by St. Anthony, but by St. Dunstan, Abbot of Glastonbury ; and this taking of the devil with the tongs gave him so much authority over the people, that he acquired boldness enough to imprison, and even kill their Queen, without by this act diminishing his credit.

HUME: *History of England*, vol. I.

END OF VOL. I.

BEATRICE CENCI.

VOL. II.

# BEATRICE CENCI:

A HISTORICAL NOVEL OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

F. D. GUERRAZZI.

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# BEATRICE CENCI.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SPECTRES.

*Tra male gatte è capitato il sorco.—DANTE, Inferno.*

SCARCELY had the old bandit ceased speaking, than a rich and silvery voice, breaking the silence of the night, bore to the ears of the bandits this song :

“Avventa le zanne,  
Atterra lecciòlli,  
Nocciòlli—corniòlli,  
Fa il bosco tremar.”

“Do not move,” said Orazio to his companions, who suspicious, had already seized their arms, “he is our friend, the deaf mute of Ferrata ; he possesses nothing in the world except his voice and his poverty ; the former you cannot take, and the latter you would not wish.”

Indeed, in a short time, the boy of Ferrata appeared, who, more cunning than his age would warrant, had found it for his advantage to feign himself deaf, dumb, and an idiot ; he asked them :

“Where is Marzio ?”

“Where ? The Lord knows ! This is the last night that

we are obliged to wait for him, if he does not come soon he never will ; the best you can do is to wait for him here with us."

"This is too bad ; what is the use of fishing without taking good care of the net ?"

"Come here, boy, and sing us your song ; meanwhile Marzio may come."

"Oh ! it is not worth it ! It is a song composed by some ignorant mountaineer of these parts ; it seems to have been made with the hatchet."

"I have no doubt that it was composed in these parts," replied Orazio, ill-humoredly, "but it is false that it was composed by an ignorant person, you ugly ape ; for I did it myself."

"Orazio, I beg your pardon, I did not believe"—

"Believe it or not, you ought to learn that it is not proper for him who sings it to sneer at the composition ; indeed my poetry is not worth your voice, but at any rate, without my verses how could you make your singing heard ?"

The boy, to avoid answering, struck a most limpid and brilliant note. Orazio had not the courage to interrupt him, and he continued :

*"Correte alle poste,  
Chè scende il cignale ;  
Non venne l'uguale  
Pei boschi a stormir.*

*Avventa le zanne,  
Atterra lecciòli ;  
Nocciòli—corniòli,  
Fa il bosco tremar.*

*Per setole ha stecchi,  
Ha fiamme per occhi ;  
Nessuno mi tocchi,  
Grugnando egli va.*

*Le belve percosse,  
Del mostro allo strido,  
Disertano il nido,  
I figli, e l'amor.*

I colli devasta  
Così, che al bifolchi  
Par corsa nel solchi  
La fiamma del ciel.

Le macchie salvate,  
Al campì accorrete ;  
Battete, uccidete,  
Quel verro crudel.

La carne del verro,  
Un rubblo ben pieno  
Di gran saraceno  
Il premio sarà

La testa, e del tiro  
Si aspetta l'onore  
Al franco uccisore  
Del Marzio cignal.

E premio più caro  
Lo aspetta, del viso  
Di Clelia un sorriso,  
Baleno di amor ;

Di Clelia la bella,  
Che quale la mira  
Dellra, sospira,  
Più posa non ha."

"Here is a kiss and a crown for you," said Marzio, emerging from the bushes in company with Olimpio, "God has given you the gift of song as rays to the stars, brilliant and soft. I shall call you the nightingale of the bandits."

But the youth, flattered by the praise, refused the money, and replied :

"Marzio, I do not sing for money ; my voice was given to me without paying for it, and I give it to you, but I do not sell it ; singing seems to me more beautiful thus. I serve you for love, that is enough. Our friend at Ferrata sent me to tell you, that the baron has arrived."

"Has arrived ?"

"Certainly, and I have seen him ; he has with him his wife, his children, and an escort of rural guards or bandits. I came also to seek mules from the coalmen, since the old man does not intend to stop, and wishes to continue his journey this very night."

"Of what number is the escort?"

"Twelve; but they are not of these parts; from their speech they appear to be from Tuscany."

Soon the mules were in order. Orazio, ordered by Marzio, blackened his face and hands with coal ; he put on the dress of a coalman, and together with the boy, led the beasts to Ferrara.

The bandits raised their encampment, and following Marzio, went to the place decided upon for the ambush.

The mules having arrived at the inn, Count Cenci commanded them to be laden, and when they were in readiness, to give him notice. Scarcely an hour had passed, when all was ready, and he went down to examine if everything was in proper order. While he went from one place to another, a bat struck with his wings the lantern which he carried before him, so that the bird fell senseless into his hand ; he shook it quickly with a feeling of disgust, throwing away the gloomy bird, and exclaimed :

"This is a bad omen, and prudence would suspend the departure."

Here the innkeeper, showing a countenance of stone, added :

"Let it make no impression, your Excellency, since the bad sign has just been compensated for, nay, surpassed by a good one."

"What is it?"

"While loading the flasks of wine, one of them was broken, and spilled wine is a sign of good luck."

"Did it happen to be the flask of Xeres, which was labelled?"

"There was no label on it, be tranquil ; it was not that flask."

"Let us go and see where it was broken."

"Below in the kitchen."

"Is the wine which was spilled still there ?"

"Eh ! no, the bricks have drunk it ; for they also wished to drink your Excellency's health."

"But this house appears to have been built at least a century ago."

"Surely ; but the pavement is new."

"Which of us was right ; you, who derived the name host from *kospes* ; or I, who thought that it was from *hostis* ?"

"Hosts, to tell the truth," interrupted the coalman, "are not a distinct race, but nature has placed them in that large species which oscillates between an ass and a crocodile."

"Who ever saw such animals ?"

"You have them before you, your Excellency ; this class is the people, which, although it always endures, sometimes also devours."

"The Count, struck by these words, took the lantern and raised it to the face of the coalman. Orazio recognized the piercing glance, the malignant smile, the marble countenance of the Count. The Count, in his turn, recalled to mind the white hair, and the features of Orazio, although he seemed much altered by age, and perhaps, as he thought, by suffering.

"It seems we are old acquaintances," said the Count, "that adventure of the white hair cannot be easily forgotten."

"It is true white locks are not forgotten ; they generally make themselves remembered."

"Although I still feel somewhat angry with you for not having satisfied me by carrying the eaglets back to the nest, still there can be no doubt that you are a brave man. I am sorry that fortune has not raised you ; and if I could I would tell



her to her face that she has done wrong, and ought to be ashamed."

Orazio, who had began to tremble at the sight of the Count's face, at these kind words recovered his self-possession, and was pleased to hear that the affair of the nest was remembered, and gave cordial thanks to the Count. But Orazio was not the same when near the Count; his courage vanished in smoke; for as Sterne expresses it, "to a great spread of sail, he had not an ounce of ballast," and, although immovable to bullets, he believed in witches, feared spells, and without the five or six medals which he wore round his neck, he would never have dared to pass the night alone."

The Count, Orazio, and the boy (who had again become deaf and dumb, and conversed only by signs) in company with six of the rural guards, headed the caravan; in the middle were the ladies, Bernardino, the armed servants, and the baggage; behind, the six other guards closed the company.

Beatrice many times had endeavored to talk to her father, many times had supplicated him with words, or with signs, to listen to her; before going out of the hostelry she had thrown herself on her knees before him, and had said to him:

"My father, do not proceed, or you will be killed—Marzio"—

But the Count, to whom this name sounded like a crime, ascribing the continued raving of his daughter to a last effort to free herself from her dangerous imprisonment at Petrella, repulsed her harshly, and ordered her to be watched, and prevented from moving from the place which had been assigned her.

The night became darker, the sky full of flecked clouds, called by the country-people mackerel-sky; and by degrees, as they ascended, the cold became more piercing, the wind whistled through the leaves of the trees; they advanced upwards by the

declivity of Rio Freddo, alternately conversing and warning each other to be careful of the road, which certainly deserved attention. Having passed Rio Freddo by the plain of Cavalieri, they arrived at Rocca Carenzia. From this place they again ascended by a lane Monte di Bove, even to the summit, where they saw the moon rise.

How different is the first quarter of this planet from the last. The first resembles a hope, the last a farewell. The men who saw often the first, properly thought of converting it into an ornament for the goddess of the woods ; those, however, who contemplated oftener the last, with greater reason, made it the attribute of Hecate, the goddess of hell. Whoever has regarded the moon in her various phases many nights, at different hours, may comprehend how it would have been rightly applied both to the goddess of lovers and thieves. Not only was the darkness not made any clearer by it, but it seemed to render it more gloomy ; the wind, hurrying on the fast-sailing clouds, more or less dense, brought alternately perfect darkness, half-obscurity, or brilliant light, which strangely transformed the appearance of things, and rendered the face of nature more terrible.

It might have been about two hours after midnight, when, having passed Rocca Cerro, by the Valerian way, they reached the portentous edge of the rocks of Tagliacozzo. If it had been dawn, or if the moon had been full, they might have distinguished Rocca Petrella ; for, by passing over only a little valley, begins the ascent to the hill of Petrella, on the summit of which, upon a rock of yellow calcareous stone, rises, or rather rose at that time the castle.

The way which leads to it over the ridge of the hill Petrella is steep, rough, and inclosed between two banks from whence hang down brambles and thorn bushes, now thinly scattered, then becoming more dense. In the rainy season the path is converted into a torrent, and the water never being able, on account

of the rapidity of its course, to reach the top of the banks which make its bed, it then happens that the path widens at the lower part, and contracts towards the top of the ridge.

When Count Cenci with his band entered this road, the moon was concealed behind a black cloud, which, on account of its great size, passed more slowly than the others, so that they proceeded almost groping for a good quarter of a mile. Unexpectedly, the moon peeping through the clouds, threw an oblique ray, and illumined the scene. Count Cenci, raising his head, saw issuing from the bushes a number of strange figures, with guns ready to fire. There was no chance to resist, still less to fly, for the precipitous ascent had weakened their strength ; and the descent, besides being crowded by the people pressing from behind, presented not a few other obstacles.

“Stop, all ! if you advance a step, you are dead.”

Thus from above a voice called, like thunder bursting from a cloud, and the band stopped.

Bandits, bravos, rural guards, a kind of people who resemble each other very much, are always faithful observers of their word. Nor ought one to believe that such actions are inspired by generous sentiments ; on the contrary, it comes from the consideration, that if they should fail in their duty, their business would fail ; for lords would either lay aside the villanies which they desire to have executed, or would have recourse to other men and other means ; so that they have in their base life the same ambition that a good mechanic has to finish a work punctually, in order to maintain his credit and customers. Induced by this feeling, the rural guards of Count Cenci's escort did not run ; and the corporal approaching him, said :

“What shall we do, your Excellency ?”

“The lion has fallen into the ditch.”

“If we move, they will kill us like dogs, without defence and without revenge.”

"I know it ; here force is of no use. Ask for a parley ; let us see if art will help us, by trying to capitulate with the bandits."

"Halloo !" cried the corporal, "how long have dogs eaten dog's flesh ? Until now I believed, that beyond comfits of lead and the nuptials of hemp, one had no other danger to run."

And this reply came :

"Few words. We will not increase the load of the woodman. The escort of twelve men may return safe ; let them, however, leave the guns, which to-morrow will be found again at sunset at the inn of Ferrata. The wolves of Abruzzo do not speak twice ; take care, the second time they speak by the mouths of their guns."

"And the family ?"

"We have other accounts with them ?"

The rural guards waited for no other intimation, and went away without uttering a word, having first stacked their arms.

"Let Count Cenci pass to the rear of the band ?" said the same voice.

The Count, ostensibly well-pleased, obeyed. Orazio followed him, and heard him say :

"Whenever I have been avaricious in my undertakings I have been always unsuccessful ; I should have taken an escort of fifty men, and I should then have saved a treasure—who knows how much ransom these fellows will demand, beside the loss of the baggage ?"

Having reached the rear of the party, four bandits leaped from behind a ridge ; and, in spite of his intention to proceed by means of cunning, natural instinct caused the Count to lay his hand upon his dagger. Scarcely had he done so, than he felt his arms bound by two iron hands. He turned in a fury to see who it was, and recognized Orazio, whose strength was increased by the fear which the Count inspired in him.

"Ah ! is it you, hunter ?"

"It is I."

"It appears that your turn of highwayman has come."

"Certainly; in this moment I leave the part of the ass and take that of the crocodile."

"Beware of binding me ; I will never forgive you this outrage ; learn, villain, to respect gentlemen."

"Ah ! my lord, pardon us beforehand, because we are ignorant, and do not know anything but how to preserve our security. These four companions have just come down to aid me in binding you."

"Let the attendants," cried the voice from above, "proceed on their way. Count Cenci must remain with us."

At this instant a head looked out for a moment from the edge of a crag, Beatrice who had been trying to understand the various things which succeeded one after the other, saw and recognized it, and understood too well that this was no question of an attack to extort money, as is usual with the Roman bandits and those of Naples; a more terrible intention lay beneath this, nor was she mistaken ; descending hence from her horse, she placed herself by the side of her father, and thus earnestly spoke :

"The spider ensnares the fly with a slight net, and bears it to his hole to suck its blood. You are not wolves of Abruzzo, but spiders of caves. The eagle in the air lives by prey, and the lion upon the earth ; be lions, and have your prey. I do not speak of what we carry with us ; this is already yours. I mean to speak of our ransom. Ask it ; we are ready to pay it ; ask as much as will suffice to enrich you all, and to make you remain contented in your homes without the cares of poverty and the fear of the gallows—we possess more money than you can imagine ; fix the limits of our ransom."

"Beatrice, are you mad ? To do what you suggest they



have no need of your counsels ; for they are able to leave you not even the eyes with which to weep."

"Hush, father ; you do not know what danger hangs over your head : let me speak. We will pay you this money, on condition that the Count shall go with us ; he will promise, on his honor as a gentleman, to disburse the money on the tenth day from this. If his promise is not sufficient, I will add mine, and confirm it with an oath ; for I inherit from my mother money and jewels enough. If, however, even this is not sufficient, retain me as a hostage, and let the Count go ; I am young and healthy, he old and infirm. Think of your families—think of the happiness of eating bread not dipped in blood—of the children which you have—of those that you may have—of your aged parents in poverty, famishing by the extinguished hearth fire."

"Away," interrupted an imperious voice ; but Orazio replied :

"Let her speak ; let us hear her to the end, for it seems to me that she says many good things."

"Listen," resumed Beatrice, "if you drag the Count away, you will find him murdered on your hands ; you will gain nothing, for those who have led you do not wish money, but the blood of a poor old man ; and slight security from the gallows will remain to you, for the police of Naples and Rome, moved by the rank of Count Cenci and by his powerful adherents, will hunt you like wolves from thicket to thicket, and you will meet death by the rope or by bullets. Since Sixtus V. what cave remains unknown ? What fortress impregnable ? How died the cavalier of Pelliccioni ? Hung. How Marco Sciarra ? Hung. How the Duke of Amalfi ? Hung : all were hung, although most powerful. Know, then, how to avail yourselves of the opportunity which fortune has placed in your hands."

The girl's earnest words began to penetrate into the mind of the bandits, especially into that of Orazio ; and if she had



been allowed to speak a little longer, all would have listened to her. But Marzio, perceiving the danger, sent Olimpio some distance off to fire his gun. This report filled the bandits with suspicion ; and Marzio then, to frighten them still more, cried as loud as he could : “ *Maledetti !* is it a time to hear the wood-lark sing ? To the forest ! to the forest ! The police are upon us.”

And Olimpio running, shouted in his turn :

“ Save yourselves, save yourselves ; the police are coming.”

“ The Count—bring the Count.”

Beatrice received a push which knocked her against the other side of the road. But still, not at all terrified, she continued to cry :

“ Listen, you are deceived ; fifty against one,” and other similar words. They dragged away the Count, who, persuaded that this was a snare to extract money from him, bore the affront less grievously, already revolving in his subtle mind a thousand designs of most cruel vengeance. He was not able to see by what road they carried him ; for at a short distance from that place they put a bandage over his eyes, and then, crafty as he was in similar arts, he perceived that they had made him turn round and round, in order to confuse him, so he should never be able, by any chance, to find the place again.

Suddenly it appeared to him that he had been left alone ; he raised his hand to the bandage, and not hearing any voice to prevent him from removing it, he raised it and found himself in a spacious cavern. Without a moment of delay, he seized a lantern which was left hanging from the wall, and carefully examined the partitions, the floor, and the ceiling ; it seemed to him that the walls and floor were partly false, and in fact they were, but so well closed up with boards, that every means of escape he knew was wholly prevented. A table, some chairs, and a pile of leaves covered with skins were the only articles

of furniture which garnished the place. The Count sat down, and the more he thought the more he was persuaded, that if a ransom did not open the doors of this sepulchre for him, other means of escape would be in vain. Many times had he been obliged to enter prisons, and he had passed through no few dangers, but still he had never felt so discouraged as now; perhaps age had partly deprived him of the boldness for which he was feared, and perhaps, also, an indistinct presentiment weighed heavily upon him, and made him restless; in short, it cannot be said that he was afraid, but nevertheless, his accustomed courage did not sustain him. A most marvellous position in which to feel the sting of pain; for on the one hand, the strength fails to burst forth and divert us as amidst the storm of anger, and on the other, the stolidity is wanting which renders us insensible to the blows of misfortune.

Several hours must have passed since he was imprisoned there, for he was seized with a feeling of faintness, which made him desire some nourishment. Our bodily wants make themselves felt in spite of the tempests of our minds; bread seems ashes, and wine fire in the stomach, which demands them with painful gnawings, and man is obliged to feed the cancer which devours him. He remained some time before he resolved to call, before he could lower his pride to demand food of the bandits; but nature urging him, he was obliged to submit to knock at the door. Scarcely had he touched it when it opened, and a crafty looking boy appeared suddenly, who, with obsequious words, but still showing a very subtle sense of scorn, told him that he had been waiting outside for a long time, not having dared to anticipate the call for fear of disturbing him in his meditations; and he knew that a prison was the place most adapted to meditate. It seemed to the Count that he recognized the boy, and verily he was the deaf mute of the Ferrata inn.

"Tell me, boy, how have you recovered your speech," asked the Count.

"By virtue of St. Andrea Avellino, who is pleased to work many miracles in these parts."

"If I leave this place," thought the Count, "rascals, I will work on you the miracles of St. Andrea Avellino. The trap has been set by a master hand; the innkeeper also is in the plot. But where is Marzio? Can it be that he is not yet killed? Can this be a snare plotted by him? Ah! would that I knew what has become of Marzio!"

"Your Excellency," continued the boy, "if you have any commands for me I will remain; otherwise I do not wish to become troublesome to you."

"No, my boy; I have called you because I wish you to bring me something to eat."

"Immediately, your Excellency," and he was about going.

"Listen—come here; is it day or night now?"

"Night, because one could not see here without light."

"Not here—but outside?"

"Outside it is equally dark. I cannot inform your Excellency whether it is night or day above, for at present I am not allowed to ascend."

"What do you mean about ascending? It did not seem to me that I descended when I came here."

"It did not seem so to you, because the declivity which leads to the middle of the cave is very slight; but you must know that we are a mile or more under ground."

The Count, perceiving that he was being laughed at by the cunning boy, darted such a look at him that, however bold the boy was, he had not courage enough to sustain it, and went away, saying:

"I will return in an instant with your dinner."

This instant lasted so long that the Count, attributing the delay to a new malice of the boy, became still more enraged with him, and determined to give him such a warning that he

would remember it for some time. At last the boy returned, feigning to pant as one who came in great haste, and brought two candlesticks of singular workmanship ; they were two slender hands, supporting lighted candles ; a table-cloth, and several kinds of viands, exquisitely cooked, and enough for ten persons ; he placed everything on the table quickly, careful to keep as far as he could from the Count. The latter sought some means of laying hold of him, but the nimble boy escaped like a fly on the face of a dog, which goes continually into his nose, ears, and eyes ; and when the dog snaps with his teeth at it, flies away, and he only bites the air. Then Count Cenci, drawing a ducat from his pocket, said to him :

“ Come here, little boy—what is your name ?”

“ Call me what you please, your Excellency.”

“ But you ought to have a name ; have you not been baptized ?”

“ I *may* have been ; but, although I *must* have been present at it, still I do not remember it—Ah ! stop a minute ; I remember ; they gave me the name of Onorato.”

“ Onorato ! It is evident in giving you this name that your godfather could not have consulted the astrologer.”

“ That is exactly what I think ; and if before baptizing me they had asked my opinion, I should not have permitted such a falsehood.”

“ Come, you amuse me ; all of you here seem to be great wits ; take this ducat, which I give you.”

“ I don't wish it.”

“ Why ?”

“ Because we ought not to take as alms what we can claim for ransom.”

“ Ah ! do you wish to put a price on the Baron ?”

“ Of course ; it is like the flesh of a pheasant ; every one wishes to taste it once in his life.”

"You also wish to put a price on the Baron !"

And he put his hand in his bosom ; but the boy, foreseeing his evil intention, with one bound reached the door, and sheltered himself behind it.

"Take this for ransom !" and so saying, the Count hurled his poniard at the boy ; the latter easily avoided it, and the steel stuck in the door, where, after having quivered for some time, it remained still. Then the boy coming forward, pulled it out gently, and extending it towards the Count, said :

"I will preserve it carefully for you, and I hope to be able to restore it, when my superiors will permit me."

The Count, finding the blow had failed, murmured, spitefully :

"Devil take it ! I do not even succeed in striking a blow."

And he seated himself at the table. If dull care had not sat beside him, certainly the food would have proved most acceptable, considering the great hunger which oppressed him ; at all events, he began to cut the meat, and in carrying a piece to his mouth, he could not help exclaiming, "I am hungry !"

At the same time, at a short distance from him, a doleful voice replied, "I starve !"

He thought it an illusion ; but on raising his eyes he beheld, opposite his own seat at the table, a pallid figure appear, tall, horribly thin, with dull eyes, like those of a dead fish, who, after the Count had stared fixedly, seemed, and really did present the features of Olimpio. He then, keeping his arm suspended between the table and his mouth, began to say :

"What is this ? Have I turned into Don Giovanni ? And you, my brave spectre, do you mean to play the part of the Commendatore ? But may I be permitted to observe, that the Commendatore had been invited by Don Giovanni, and you come of your own accord ; which importunity is highly improper in a well-educated ghost ; besides, the Commendatore was of marble, but you, of what material are you ? At all events, welcome, Sir



Spectre, and if you please to eat, eat, and may it do you good."

Wonderful to relate ! scarcely had the Count uttered these words, than the spectre, as if he were troubled with that most terrible disease, which physicians call *Bulimo*, or canine appetite, threw himself frantically upon the food prepared, and made everything disappear in the twinkling of an eye, even snatching the dish placed before the Count ; nor did he stop here ; he swallowed napkins and table-cloth ; then he seized the dishes, and grinding them with his teeth, devoured the fragments. The Count, astonished and frightened, had not sufficient courage to save anything, not even the piece of meat on his fork ; the insatiable vampire devoured everything ; then he remained immovable, and looking fixedly at the Count, with his mouth open, and showing his teeth, repeated :

" I starve !"

" Perdition on you !" exclaimed the Count, pretending a boldness which he was far from feeling, " what have I to give you ?" And perceiving a certain bundle of straw in a corner of the cave, he placed it near this wild beast, saying :

" Take, and eat it."

And the spectre devoured the straw also. When he had finished, he turned, as before, his horrible face towards the Count, howling from his open mouth :

" I starve !"

" I have nothing more to give you—eat your own heart."

" I starve !—I starve !—not my heart, but your flesh will I eat, dog, who made me starve to death."

And like a wild beast he overthrew the table and lights, and rushed upon the Count ; the latter strove to get free, but was knocked down with irresistible force, and felt himself bitten with fury on his left shoulder. Count Cenci, although greatly agitated and weakened by fasting, did not give himself up to this



creature, for the thought of being devoured by such a cannibal infused a Titanic force into his muscles. They rolled over together upon the pavement, biting, and trying to strangle each other ; they uttered desperate howls, they tore each other with their teeth ; they scratched with their nails ; they pummelled with their fists ; breath came smoking from their nostrils and mouths ; their hearts, throbbing with tremendous palpitations, threatened to burst from their breasts. It was a fearful fight !

But his strength not corresponding to his will, the Count soon began to lose consciousness ; occasional sighs issued from his throat ; he struggled with one last effort, when a noise of chains was heard, and a voice cried :

“The vampire has broken his chain !”

It seemed to the Count, for he could not see distinctly, that certain black and murderous figures, with lighted pine branches, entered from many parts of the cavern, detaching themselves from the walls, and throwing themselves upon the wretched wild beast, and succeeded in binding him with four chains, and, holding the ends far from each other, they dragged him out of the cave. The Count lay all this time extended on the floor ; putting his hands on the ground, he succeeded, although with difficulty, in sitting upright ; he panted frightfully ; he dripped with perspiration and blood. One of the candles was extinguished, the other overturned ; he tried to place it upright in the lugubrious candlestick ; he felt violent pains in his throat, shoulders, and other parts of his body. He tried to recall to his mind these events, but he could not succeed ; his head also ached heavily, and a deluge of sparks danced before his eyes. Wearied by fatigue, weakened by fasting and pain, the Count, groping, sought for the bed of leaves, and reached it. The shivering which he felt in his bones induced him to get under the skins ; he began to raise them with a trembling hand, when a sepulchral voice, issuing from under them, said :

“Welcome, long looked-for one—how you have delayed !—it is a long time since I, watching, have expected you !”

The Count raised himself upon his knees to see what it was, and saw a naked human body, with the face covered with a mass of entangled hair drenched in blood ; the handle of a poniard came out of the middle of its breast, and from an open wound there continually flowed a stream of blood.

“I am the girl of Vittana,” continued the voice ; “if I hated you once, it was because I had given to another a wife’s faith ; but now death has absolved me from the obligation, and I am thankful for the gift which you gave me, and which I bear here in the midst of my heart. Hasten, quickly—let us atone for lost time—I am ready to intoxicate myself with love.”

And the horrid figure extended her arms to attract him with alluring gestures. The Count started, horrified, and repulsed her with all his remaining strength. But in vain ; for the figure, seizing him strongly by the waist, forced him to lie down. Then she pressed him deliriously to her bosom, and with the handle of the dagger beat the ribs and breast of the Count, who groaned with new spasms, and then kissed and re-kissed him with lips dropping blood. In a short time the hands, breast, face, and hair of the Count were covered with it ; he could not hold his eyes or mouth open, without feeling a warm stream of it raining in, to blind and suffocate him. At last, the fury of the spectre seemed bordering on delirium ; it redoubled most ardently its kisses and sobs, and pressed the old Count so fiercely in its arms that the latter, his breast ready to burst, sighed in insupportable anguish, and fainted.

Hardly had his consciousness begun to return, than a confusion of cries and doleful groans, mingled with the clanking of chains, broke upon his ears. His closed eyelids were not sufficient to defend his eyes from the dreadful glaring. At last he opened them, and saw the cavern in flames ; he raised himself.

astonished, upon the bed, and he beheld in the midst of this fire different figures in desperate attitudes, that howled enough to deafen him.

"To hell ! to hell !" And from the crowd of figures one started out entirely black, except that the flames showed its eyes, nose, ears, and mouth ; the wrinkles on its countenance seemed as if stamped with lines of fire. The figure, approaching the Count, raised his flaming hand as if to curse him, and uttered these words :

"I am the soul of the carpenter of Ripetta. Be accursed for the atrocious death which thou hast made me suffer ; accursed for the hell into which thou hast hurled me, since I died without the sacraments, and my soul expired blaspheming God."

The Count, although his body was so shattered that he could scarcely draw his breath, and discouraged in mind, still more from habit than from any design of scorn, feebly said :

"Since you are, as I believe, the first courier which the devil ever sent in this world, give me news of hell."

"Do you wish for it ? Give me your hand."

And as the Count refused, the figure continued, deridingly :

"Is Count Cenci afraid ?"

And he gave it to him. Then the figure extended the forefinger of his right hand and placed it in the middle of the Count's palm. As flaming drops fallen upon the ground from bituminous torches held obliquely, continue to burn until they are consumed, so from the arm of the fiend issued bubbles of fiery perspiration, which hurried hissing over the back of his hand and fingers upon the palm of Cenci. The latter screamed, and not being able to support the pain tried to withdraw his hand to shake off the fire, but he could not, for the figure held him firmly, crying :

"Receive the marks of the devil, old ruffian."

And the Count, groaning with insufferable torment, fainted again.

"He can bear no more," exclaimed the figures ; " let us leave him to bite the dust." And thus speaking, they disappeared with loud bursts of laughter.

Whether this vengeance was human or divine, it stung most bitterly, and, as it seemed, was only a beginning.

The unfortunate Count remained long deprived of sense. When, with a sigh, he returned to consciousness, he felt, in refreshment for the agony suffered, a helping hand wipe the perspiration from his brow, and with ablutions of cold water temper the fever heat which burnt in his veins ; he opened his eyes, and something more wonderful than the others appeared to him.

Beatrice, his daughter, seated by his side upon the leaves, who, after having bathed his face and bound up his wounds, was doing her best to restore him to himself. The angelic appearance of the girl breathing pity, and the sweet act of love, would have persuaded the most gloomy and wicked mind that she was moved by the most tender impulse of charity ; but on the contrary, the Count, in his vile soul, quickly imagined that his daughter was an accomplice of his persecutors, and that she had come there to reproach him for past events, and to rejoice in her triumph. Beatrice, as soon as she saw he had come to himself, approached closer to his ear, and with a soft voice asked :

" Father, do you feel strength enough to support yourself on your feet ?"

And as he was about to reply, she quickly added in an under tone :

" Do not speak—make signs with your head."

The Count nodded *yes*. The girl replied :

" Father, you must use every effort ; here great care is necessary, for I not only intend to lead you from prison to liberty, but from death to life."

The words *liberty* and *life* are powerful sounds to the heart of a human being ; for the Count, in spite of his acute sufferings,

was soon upon his feet, expressing with the motion of all his limbs, "let us go !"

Having left the cave, they entered into another, much more spacious than the first ; and here, in the midst of his stolen furniture, scattered promiscuously on the ground, he saw by the uncertain light flickering through the dense mist, fifteen or twenty bandits sleeping—some stretched on the floor, some leaning against the table. Although he used infinite care in walking, supporting himself upon the arm of Beatrice, still, staggering from weakness and pain, he struck against an earthen vase, which, falling, broke with a loud noise. He froze with terror, lest some one of them should awake ; but casting his eyes around, he saw Olimpio and the hated boy overcome with sleep, and also saw the flask of Xeres turned upside down upon the table.

" Ah ! they have drunk my drugged wine. They will awake very slowly—some never more ;" and he left the arm of Beatrice.

" Where are you going, father ?"

" Let me first kill at least a couple of them ;" and, saying this, he would have fallen to the ground, if the ready hands of Beatrice had not helped him.

" Let us try to save ourselves, for the love of God. You see that you can with difficulty stand up ;" and, taking him again by the arm, she drew him with her.

They continued their way ; and whoever could have beheld them would have thought that he saw the picture by Raphael in the gallery of the Vatican, representing the liberation of St. Peter from prison by the angel ; the sleeping bandits resembling the soldiers—the beautiful and divinely kind Beatrice seemed the angel. The head of the Count, we have already said, sometimes looked like that of a saint ; but, considering his merits, it is just that it should not be likened to that of St. Peter, but to that of the beheaded St. John.



Having crossed the cave, they ascended a narrow path out of the rock parallel to the door, and a short distance from it they reached the opening, which was most carefully hidden under a heap of bramble bushes. A fresh morning breeze blew upon these hills very cutting, at least for those who, like Beatrice and the Count, had come from a warm place, and were lightly clad ; but yet, being absorbed by the thought of flight, they did not feel or notice it. The sun had not yet risen, but the calm dawn showed distinctly surrounding objects, and Beatrice happened immediately to discover a horse, which, tied to a tree, was grazing a short distance off, on the nearest bushes of the wood. She darted forward—seized him ; the trappings suitable for riding were wanting, yet, notwithstanding this, she found it with pleasure, on account of her father, who could scarcely walk. The Count recognized it as the horse which he had given to Marzio ; and with difficulty, aided by his daughter, he succeeded in mounting it. He then wished to take her on behind him ; but she, considering his weakness and the fever which was tormenting him, his painful wounds, and the want of saddle and stirrups, signified to him that she would only be an obstacle and hindrance to his flight.

It was a very touching sight, that of a most delicate girl, tormented by every kind of barbarous treatment from her father, forgetful now of the injuries which she had suffered—fearing, and still unprotected from future outrages—urged by her filial love, guiding the horse over those precipices ; scarcely heeding the rocks which wounded her tender feet, mindful only lest the horse should stumble, and hurt the wounds of the infirm old man by the sudden motion. Occasionally she looked at her father, not in order to receive thanks, but to observe if the hardness of his heart, which had caused to herself and others so many years of afflictions, had been softened. The Count, deep in his own thoughts, kept his eyes fixedly upon the horse's head, troubled



in aspect, and muttering short and fierce words. He, who had done so much evil in the world, could not understand without great anger how others could have dared to offend him, and revolved fearful designs of revenge in his mind. How was it possible that the terror of Count Cenci had not withheld them from putting their hands on him? Ah! what tortures for these miserable fellows could ever satisfy him?

Already they were near the spot where the attack took place, when, with wonder equal to their fear, they saw a band of bandits, not only in ambush, but with their guns pointed over the road. Beatrice, agitated by painful anxiety, stopped; the Count started, and seeing this new attempt, his old suspicions returned to him, and he asked:

“Have you led me here to see my death? Would it not have been better to let me be killed in the cave?”

Beatrice raised her eyes to heaven and sighed; then, letting go the bridle of the horse, ran to the place where she saw the bandits appear; but long before reaching the place, her glance saw the deception. Then, turning to her father, she beckoned him with voice and gesture to come boldly on.

“You may safely come, for there is no danger.”

The Count, reassured by the face and words of Beatrice, and considering also that doubt would be of no avail, for all means of escape were cut off, pushed his horse ahead; and he then noticed that the bandits, to cause fright, and to appear four times more numerous than they really were, had planted all along the edge of the road poles covered with straw and rags, giving them the appearance of bandits standing on their guard. Having travelled the inclosed path, they came out on the open and safe ground; for even had the bandits been at liberty to do it, they would never have dared to approach in open day so near to Rocca Petrella, inhabited by about a thousand people, the greater part of whom were strong by daily labor, and gene-

rally armed with guns and axes. Here the Count, with severe tone, said to Beatrice :

“Tell me by what means you were able to come to me?”

“Father, would it not be better to hasten our steps, and defer explanation until you are rested from your anxieties, and more prepared to listen to me calmly?”

“You, as soon as I express a desire, are in the habit of opposing me ; and truly you might have understood by this time that I hate opposition. Obey me ; people in my hands ought to be as dead.”

“I will obey,” answered Beatrice, raising her eyes to heaven, as if to say, “Lord, give me patience.” “Marzio, while I was in prison, told me the sad story of the murder of the girl of Vittana ——”

“How—what ! What is that you say ?”

“When you kept me imprisoned in the cellar of the palace in Rome, Marzio told me the death of Annetta Riparella of Vittana.”

“Go on.”

“And he told me also that he was her husband, and you had killed her ; and he was bound by an oath, made upon the dead body of the girl, to revenge her with your blood. For this end he had taken service in our house, but seeing the unhappy life which you made us lead, his hatred against us was changed into pity, and for this reason he had not murdered you in the house as he had designed, for fear we should be charged with it, and punished.”

“And you knew this, and did not tell me any thing about it ?”

“Sir, how could I ? In the prison you would hardly open the door, and throwing me bread and water, would turn your back upon me.”

“But if you willed, you could have done it.”

"When? when we started, twice I conjured you to listen to me; you pushed me into the carriage, and shut the door, putting the key into your pocket. At the Ferrata inn, you remember, you pushed me aside; on the road you ordered them not to let me move from my place, and you remained at a distance—how could I, then?"

"You always dare to be in the right; I tell you that you could have warned me; for if you did not participate in the wicked plot in your heart, at least you did not desire to prevent it. Go on."

"Marzio departed in the night, after having let Olimpio escape, whom you had condemned to starve to death.

"Then this fellow lives? Ah, rascals, how well you plotted against me! Go on."

"At the moment of the attack, I endeavored to pay particular attention to what happened, and in spite of the diligence used by Olimpio and Marzio in disguising themselves"——

"Marzio! Then he is not dead?"

"I noticed him among the bandits; rather the chief of them. Then I saw that it was not a question of your ransom only, but of your life; hence my speech, and the large promise to the bandits, in order that, attracted by the cupidity of gain, they might abandon Marzio, and let us go. This attempt having failed, I slipped quietly from the horse and followed you at a distance, hiding myself now behind a trunk, now a bush; as soon as the bandits reached the edge of the precipice of Tagliacozzo, they disappeared from my eyes. I approached noiselessly, and found the opening, although diligently covered with bushes; I descended the lane which we have passed together, and I heard a confused noise of laughter and curses. I would not go away, and still I could not conceive any means of helping you. At this moment, I heard Marzio ordering a bandit to take some men with him and go to Tagliacozzo;

therefore I retired in haste, hiding myself behind a bush. Several bandits went out, and I remained hidden for some hours; later in the night I risked myself again in the path which leads to the cavern; I listened, and heard not the least noise; I looked in, and by the glare of the dying lantern I saw the bandits all asleep. I tried to enter; I advanced hesitatingly on tip-toe. I saw a door, I thought you might be shut up within it; I pushed the bolt, opened it, and found you fainting on the pavement. God visibly aided me, and you are safe."

"Very well," said the Count. In the meanwhile they had reached the castle. The Count, before going to bed to obtain rest for his dreadful pains, called several of his servants, and promised them four thousand sequins if they would bring to him dead or alive the bandits, whom they would be able to arrest safely in the cavern of Tagliacozzo.

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After a long sleep the bandits awoke. Orazio was the first to speak :

"It seems that we have fastened the ass to a good post; this cursed wine has turned my blood into lead. Let us see what we have done with our prisoner; it seems to me that had he upon his soul even double the sins which he has committed, he would deserve now full absolution."

"Yes," answered Marzio, "it is time that we should chant to him the funeral mass."

"Softly to hasty steps; before the *Requiem*, it would be as well to extract something from him, say about twenty thousand ducats."

"Certainly," replied Ghirigoro, "the torture which he has suffered is enough, and we could not renew it without killing him by it."

"Truly," continued Orazio, "I believe I have broken his ribs with the handle of the dagger which I carried fixed in my breast, and I feel some pain, for I clasped him with rage and fear ; look how stained I am with that bloody horse tail ; the blood of the bladder has drenched my arms and chest."

"I tell you what," replied Olimpio, "without your candles we could not have accomplished anything ; how the old rascal did bite ! Certainly he must have the devil in him. Come, Orazio ! tell us how did you make those two infernal candles ?"

"It is a secret which has cost me money and labor to learn. An Armenian astrologer in Venice, when he taught it to me, took fifty golden ducats in advance."

"We didn't suppose you avaricious, Orazio. If you wish, however, we will pay you the sum ; but among us everything ought to be in common."

"Oh, I didn't say it for that ! Hear then, and learn. That is called the hand of glory, and is made thus : you must first cut off the left hand of a man who has been hung, and wrap it within a piece of new linen, place it in an earthen vase, and let it remain there for fifteen days, covered with Arabian balsam ; then it must be exposed to a July sun until it is dried up. The candles are made of grease that has sweated from the murderer's gibbet, pure wax, and sesame of Japan. These candles, placed in the fingers of the hand of glory, have the power of stupifying people, and causing them to see strange things full of terrors."

"And certainly they have stupified us, for I feel very confused in my head."

"It may be ; but I fear that the wine of Xeres, which we drank, must have been drugged."

"If Marzio had acted his part also, the scene would have been complete ; tell us, Marzio, why did you not come ?"

"I ? Because I was so overcome with a desire of wringing his neck, and choking him without waiting longer ; and so

my revenge would have been full, and you would have lost the ransom. Come, now, I am weary of delay ; go and extort from him whatever money you want ; then, according to our agreement, leave him in my power."

They renewed the oil in their lamps, and approached the door of the prison ; they found the bolt lifted ; the prison empty.

They uttered a cry of rage, which was answered from the entrance of the cave by a cry of alarm. A bandit entered staggering, who had been slightly wounded in the side, and cried painfully ;

" We are surprised, out quickly, or they will kill us like foxes in their holes."

The bandits seized their weapons, and rushed out of the cave.

This dialogue explains the torments which they had made the Count suffer. The hands and candles of glory were superstitions, which were fully believed in those times. The preparations previously disposed in the cavern by order of Marzio, which terror had believed fearfully supernatural, were only juggler's tricks.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE NIGHT OF CRIME.

Con mano empia tentava  
I misteri di amore in quelle membra ;  
Ma lo respinse un Dio che lei vegliava :  
Il Dio che pura se la tolse in cielo,  
Come quando ella usciva dal suo pensiero.

ANFOSSI : *Beatrice Concl.*

LET us see how Francesco Cenci has reformed.

Within a room in the castle of Rocca Petrella is Beatrice, kneeling on the floor, with her blond hair loosened, her forehead turned towards heaven, her arms hanging down. In beauty and attitude she resembled the famous statue of Faith, by Lorenzo Bertolini.

The room in which she is, is a prison. So far her life has been a toilsome road, of which imprisonments have been milestones to distinguish the spaces. The aspect of the room was strange to look at ; splendid was the bed, with wide curtains of damask and gilded cornices ; the floor was covered with a carpet representing Æneas listening to the malignant forebodings of the Harpy Celæno ; upon a rough wooden table were placed vases and basins of silver ; the walls were dreary, and here and there traced with marks, or words of sorrow.

Beatrice, with her eyes raised to heaven, neither prays nor reproaches ; she seems rather to ask : " God ! hast thou forsaken me ? "

Her words were like the last uttered by Christ upon the cross, before declining his head and expiring.

A long while did the girl remain kneeling, absorbed in deep and painful thoughts ; when she rose, weariness overcame her, and she let herself fall on the bed. Sleep was a better friend to her than watching.

A slight touch pushes the door ; it moves silently on its hinges ; the head—then the chest—finally, all the person of a white-haired old man appears, wrapped in a large cloak, with the red hood on the head. It is Count Cenci, dragged there by fate. He stops—and listens to the breath of Beatrice. He leans all his body on one foot, cautiously moves the other, advancing quietly, and reaches the head of the bed.

Beatrice has shut her eyes in a troubled sleep, and moving restlessly, her hair has fallen in disorder over her neck.

He looks long at her. The sight of a form so divinely beautiful would rejoice the soul ; for a rose and a woman, the less they show of themselves the more beautiful they appear.

What dares he to do ? Is it not enough, and even too much, to see that bosom heave ?

The fierce old man stretches his lean arms, and draws very cautiously the covering towards him. The treasures of her form are revealed to him—of such a form, that Love himself would have veiled with his own wings the eyes of a lover.

Softly—softly the door of the room moves again on its hinges ; another man enters, and stops—is astonished—and in the feeble light does not recognize the Count. The latter, luxuriating through every fibre, trembles ; his eyes quiver like those of a viper ; lustful flame reddens his cheeks ; he lets the cloak fall from his shoulders ; bends one knee upon the extreme edge of the bed, and deliriously extends his hands.

A tempest of rage shakes the soul of Guido—for the new comer is he : unconsciously he finds his poniard in his hand.

The Count hears a groan behind him, and turns his head. Guido darts in the eyes of the old man a glance of lightning, which means death. The Count, terrified, lets the covering fall, but Guido rushes with one leap upon him, and grasps him by that hair whitened in crime. The Count opens his mouth with a convulsive gasp—does he pray or menace?—in vain ; the steel, thunder-like tears open his throat, cuts the arteries, and penetrates so deep into his breast that he is not able to utter a word. He staggers—falls—strikes heavily on the pavement, pouring from his open throat fountains of blood and a confused muttering.

Beatrice, uttering a groan, languidly opens her eyes—God of heaven ! is it not an illusion ?—she fixes them on the face of her beloved Guido. Love, with his rosy hands, opens her lips to the sweetest of smiles ; but it fell upon the soul of her lover as upon a bronze statue—he looks fiercely at her, and with his dripping poniard points to the fallen man.

The smile dies upon the lips of Beatrice, as the kiss which, in the moment of our waking, we send to the vision of our dream. Still the girl does not know all the mysteries of this accursed night. Who is that fallen man, and what does he here ? He has his face turned to the ground, does not breathe, and the light of the lamp can hardly reach there. Beatrice already moves her lips to ask ; Guido notices this movement, and fears it ; he motions with his eyes to the dying man ; she follows with her eyes the glance of Guido on him ; then turns to look on her lover—he is gone !

A fatal idea flashes into the mind of Beatrice. Unmindful of her maiden modesty, she leaps from the bed, and does not shudder, nor notice that her foot is bathed in the blood with which the floor is inundated. She grasps the hair of the dying man and turns his head—it is her father !

He slowly moves his mouth in the last agony ; his eyes stare

horribly in the immobility of death. Beatrice springs to her feet, with her arms stretched out, her body inclined, petrified with fright ; she seems struck with madness. The eyes of the Count open wider—brighten—give one long look—then become of the color of lead—extinguished. Count Cenci is no more !

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The hand of Necessity, whose fingers are rage, fear, love, fury, and pity, horribly bent the bow of Beatrice's intellect, and if it did not break it, stupefied it. The girl stands immovable, without thought and without feeling. Guido, in fury, descends hastily the stairs, enters the room where Lady Lucrezia, Bernardino, Olimpio, and Marzio were ; and throwing far from him the bloody poniard, exclaims :

“ He is dead ! He is dead ! ”

“ Why did you not leave us the care of settling our old accounts with Cenci ? ” asked Olimpio.

And Marzio, coldly, added :

“ This is an event of which we must be assured ; ” and he went to the prison.

Singular human nature ! Marzio, capable of killing the Count with the same devotion with which he would have recited his beads, as soon as he perceived the girl undressed, retired modestly, and spoke to Lady Lucrezia in a low tone ; who, overcoming her fear, entered the room of crime. She approached Beatrice ; called her ; shook her ; and not obtaining any answer, covered her with the cloak which had fallen from the Count, and taking her by the wrist led her away. She let herself be carried at will, made no resistance to the washing of her bloody feet, to the rubbing with vinegar, and being carried to bed ; she stared wildly, but did not utter a word. They knew it was necessary to bleed her ; but they had no proper instru-

ments, and were ignorant how to use them ; to call a doctor would have been dangerous.

Marzio, according to his ferocious design, entered the room, followed by Olimpio ; he shook the corpse by the hair, and drawing out his *stiletto* thrust it into his left eye :

“ Now I am sure he is dead ! ”

“ There was no need of this,” observed Olimpio, placing his finger in the wound of the Count ; “ look what a hole ! The soul might have gone out in a carriage from here. Now let us think a moment, what must we do with this man ; ” and he kicked the head of the corpse.

“ Let us carry him into the garden and bury him under ground.”

“ You have lost all your judgment ; it is not enough to bury him ; he must die first, in a manner which may have some sense in it. Come here ; take him by the feet ; I will take him by the head, and let us carry him upon the terrace which looks upon the garden ; I know that this terrace leads to the ante-chamber, and in some places the parapet is destroyed. The poor gentleman, getting up for something during the night, was groping without a light—think what an imprudent thing ! Perhaps he had eaten too much supper, and certainly drank more wine than usual. What an accident ! Unfortunately he missed his footing and fell ! ”

“ Poh ! poh ! it is very well that a man falling from an height should break his neck or his head, but he is never wounded by a sharp and acute steel.”

“ And even for this there is a remedy ; we will throw him upon the trees ; then we will stick the points of the branches into the wounds, and that will be enough. Do you suppose, Marzio, that they will be so particular about it ? Who is dead is dead, and a health to the living.”

“ Sometimes the dead come back ; however, the idea is good.”

And it was done as Olimpio suggested.

Lady Lucrezia, by means of a window on the lower floor of the castle, the iron grates of which were wanting, had introduced Guido, Marzio, and Olimpio in the dead of night, when the family were all in bed, so that they were seen by no living person ; and they intended to go out by the same way from which they had entered. Guido, who had come to consult about the manner of freeing Beatrice from prison, having chanced to kill the Count, decided to start for Rome immediately. Marzio and Olimpio departed the same night for the confines of the Neapolitan state, to sail for Sicily or for Venice ; they received two thousand sequins for a present, beside the promise of future favors.

Guido arrived at the Inn of Ferrata, ordered his horse to be saddled immediately ; which being done as he desired, the inn-keeper, who had scrutinized him keenly with his malicious eyes, holding his stirrup, said :

“ Oh, sir ! day before yesterday you told me you were going up to Rocca Petrella to pass the month of September ; why ! have you eaten the whole month in two dinners ? Mercy ! what an appetite ! ”

“ Man proposes, and God disposes ! ”

“ I would rather say, that you went to enact a tragedy ; you have performed your part, and now return home.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ Nothing ; except that the sleeve of your corset is stained with blood.”

Guido looked bewildered at the sleeve, and saw that the inn-keeper had told the truth ; and turning to him, with cross tone, said :

“ Are you the rural police ? ”

“ I am astonished at you, sir. I am friend of a certain Marzio, whom I imagine you must know a little ; and I am almost



like a father to these poor children of the wood ; I am a natural enemy of poverty, but honest. I have said this, so that, in case you should have need, you may count upon the inn-keeper of Ferrata."

Guido reëntered the inn, and stopped longer than was necessary to wash the sleeve. In separating from the inn-keeper he shook his hand familiarly, and smiled as if he had been an old friend. Crime makes one contract strange friendships !

The next day, which was the tenth of September, Rocca Petrella resounded with wailings and lamentations, which echoed more noisily than sincerely. The inhabitants of the place, and the peasants around, gathered in crowds to see the spectacle. The corpse of the Count, not without design, was left for a long time hanging upon the branches of an alder-tree. The old women of the neighborhood, standing in a circle around the tree, with their heads lifted up, told all the strange stories they could. Some said that the old sinner, going to the witches' encampment at Barletta to render homage to the devil, had risen in the air riding on a broomstick ; but happening to mention the name of Jesus, the broomstick had broken, precipitating him from a height of four miles and more. Others maintained that the contract with the devil, by which he had sold his soul to him, having expired, the latter, of course, had appeared to take possession of it. This opinion was confirmed by noticing the body hanging from the alder-tree, which, together with the savin, the nut-tree, and such like, is consecrated to the devil. This idea, however, was weakened by a washerwoman of Petrella swearing that, going out of the house on business, she had heard a great noise in the air, and all the cats mewing on the roofs, and a little while after a night-owl had put out her lantern with a blow of his wings ; all which was a sign that some one was passing through the air. It would be very tedious to narrate all the stories that people were accustomed to bring forth on such occa-

sions, which were believed not only by the poor women and ignorant peasants, but also by very learned men and most eminent lawyers; I say nothing of the priests, for feigning to believe, in order to make others believe, is a part of their trade, and they find their profit in it. He who lives on wheat, sows wheat ; and he who lives on error, sows error ; and this is natural.

A little after the group of old women had arrived, came a number of men with the curate at their head, and all together were speculating how this body could have happened to be thus hanging in the air ; but in order to interrupt these importunate speculations, a servant came who, on the part of her Excellency the Countess, invited them all to enter the palace. They went, and found Lady Lucrezia inconsolable, according to the custom of all widows, whether consolable or not, who, after having spoken some time, interrupted now and then by her tears and sighs, of the unfortunate accident, ordered the curate to prepare a most magnificent funeral for the dead, becoming the nobility and splendor of the Cenci family ; she invited the mountaineers to come and assist at it, promising very large alms in relief of the poor families, that they might pray for peace to the poor soul. They went off edified by the piety of her Excellency, and did not cease to magnify her mildness and benevolence. When they returned to take down the body of the Count, they found it not only already taken down from the tree, but shut and nailed within a double oaken coffin.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE RED MANTLE.

*Ulric.*                      It is no time  
For trifling or dissembling. I have said  
His story 's true; and he, too, must be silenced.

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You stand high with the state; what passes here  
Will not excite her too great curiosity.  
Keep your own secret, keep a steady eye,  
Stir not and speak not; leave the rest to me:  
We must have no *third* babblers thrust between us.

BYRON, *Werner.*

"THE game is lost; shuffle the cards again."

"But, Don Olimpio," observed the gamester, with a bitter-sweet voice, "remember that you began to play before twilight, and now it is near morning. Every minute that passes, I seem to be on the grate of St. Lorenzo."

"When you opened your mouth before, and I shut it with a ducat, you stopped barking, ugly dog. *Per Dio!* I have lost this also. Hand the cards to me."

"I wished you would go home more than I wished your money; truly—on my word."

"Pah! what is your word worth?"

"The Viceroy has decreed that the game should stop at midnight, and now it is already seven hours past. If the police, who have an old spite against me, should find me in fault, I might as well take a stone and throw myself into the gulf."

"Ugly Judas Iscariot!" cried Olimpio, striking his fist on the

table, which upset the bottles and made the tumblers and other glasses dance, "you cast a spell upon my cards ; this also is lost. I am losing everything."

The gamester had lied as usual, for he and the police were united like fingers on the same hand—always ready to shut in order to grasp. The police did not possess a more punctual and precise spy than the gamester about affairs which happened in his gambling-house, and even beyond it.

"Broke !" roared out Olimpio.

"Courage, Don Olimpio ; you may regain it to-morrow."

"By the Apostles Peter and Paul ! a long time have I said the same ; but fortune caresses me with combs of hemp."

"Perseverance will conquer ; and that you are persevering we have proof, for you return every day furnished with balls and powder. So that I have believed, and do still believe, that the receiver of the galley of Peru are two, you and King Philip our lord, whom God preserve."

"Marzio keeps continually grumbling that my share is ended, and that his thousand sequins are very near the end."

"A thousand and a thousand make two thousand. But do you know," observed the gamester, "that here, with two thousand sequins, one can buy a dukedom ? What did you do to gain so much money ?"

The question was too direct not to make Olimpio avoid it. He looked somewhat cunningly at the gamester, and answered :

"They came to me from plunders when we were fighting for the faith."

"For what faith ?" continued the other ; "for, by your leave, it seems to me you must have found yourself oftener with the Turks than with the Christians ; and in what sea have you fought, Don Olimpio ?"

"Oh, in so many seas."

"Still, in which one ?"

Olimpio, besieged by questions, would have easily knocked against some rock, if one of the gamblers had not casually helped him out by asking :

“ Why do you not bring with you this companion, Don Marzio ?”

“ Oh, Marzio moves in higher circles ; he plays with gentlemen, and cuts like a duke, as if we had not lived together in the forests of Luco.”

“ In the forest, then,” remarked the sneering gamester, placing his finger upon the table, “ in the forest, then, and not on the sea, you won your plunder ?”

“ Either the forest or the sea, what matters it to you, ugly Judas ? Ah ! do you wish to spy upon me ?” replied Olimpio, savagely.

The gamester, who was afraid of the colossus, drew back his desire for knowledge, like the snail, who draws in its horns when it feels them touched.

The following evening Olimpio did not sit as usual before the gambling table, but at the end of the room, with his arms folded and a pipe in his mouth, puffing continually. His face, usually savage, now, shadowed by this dense fog, looked more savage still.

“ The galley of Peru has not arrived this evening ?”

“ Why did you not bring your companion, Don Marzio ?”

These two questions, like two arrows, struck on the same target ; so that Olimpio, feeling stung, after having cursed this saint and that, said in a rage :

“ Because he has got on his back a red mantle, he thinks that he is Count Cenci himself, from whom he stole it.”

“ Here, console yourself,” said the gamester, placing a flask of wine before him.

Olimpio emptied it in a moment, and, sighing, replaced it on the table.

"You don't like me," continued the gamester, "and you do wrong ; and to prove it to you, if you want a dozen of ducats, to play with and regain your losses, I will lend them to you."

"And who has said that I don't like you ? I like you as bread."

"And that Marzio, whom you honor as your superior, maltreats you, and denies you money ?"

"Just imagine ! Do you know what he told me when I said that I had no more money ?—'if you are poor, hang yourself.'"

"Did he ?"

"Yes ; and that I should say to him where I intended to go ; for if I went west, he would go east."

"*Per Bacco !* it would make even stones cry out ;" and the gamester sipped the wine, and then offered the flask to Olimpio, who drank the contents without taking breath. "Usual ungratefulness of men : while they have need of you they promise everything ; after the feast they remove the flowers, and who has had it keeps it."

"Just so ; but"—

"And now, what can you do ? If I can help you, you may rely on me ; and you will see that for my friends I would throw myself into the fire. True friends are only known in need. Come, let us drink."

"Let us drink," replied Olimpio ; and after having drunk, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, he continued :

"I don't know : if I could send secretly a letter to Rome, to the Cenci family, I am certain that aid would not fail me, because it would be necessary for them to help me."

"Yes—eh ?" insisted the gamester, keeping his ears stretched like a frightened hare ; and the muscles of his face grew like the grass towards the end of August after a good shower ; he showed the joy of carnivorous animals, when, hidden among the bushes, they see and hear their prey approach.



Nor was it true that Marzio had said offensive words to Olimpio ; on the contrary, he had very mildly told him that for several days his share of one thousand sequins was gone, and that, as it was urgent that both should leave the country, he could not consent that the money necessary for the voyage should be stolen in gambling houses, or expended in taverns. But Olimpio lied purposely, and feigned a wrong to believe himself in the right—a frequent thing among bad people ; and, what seems more strange, they themselves sometimes, by believing their own lies, grow enraged if they receive no satisfaction for the injury which they have never received.

Nevertheless, Marzio, thinking it over, thought of not having acted wisely, and that it was dangerous to contend with the brutal passions of Olimpio, greatly increased by the corruption of a large city ; therefore he decided to go and find him, and quiet him until he had taken him out of the kingdom, which he intended soon to do. Knowing to what gambling house he was accustomed to go in the evening, he went there, calculating certainly upon finding him.

“ Would it be necessary ? ” continued the gamester. “ What ! are the Cencis your bankers, Olimpio ? ”

“ You may think—that they are.”

“ I understand,” added the gamester. “ You have, perhaps, sent some enemy of the house to sleep ? ”

“ Pensions are not given now-a-days for such business ; for even here, as there, I suppose marplots have ruined everything.”

“ What then ? ”

“ It is worse—worse than that—the secret is here within—and in order that the safe be locked, they must put on a silver cover.”

“ Truly ? And can you trust me with this secret ? ”

“ I know—who killed Count Cenci ! ”

“ Oh ! ” exclaimed in chorus the gamblers, on seeing appear among them at this moment a man of polite bearing, wrapped in

a magnificent red mantle embroidered with gold, "welcome Don Marzio."

Marzio wondered not a little at hearing himself called by name; and turning his eyes around, fixed them on Olimpio, who slightly moved his head, and then restored it to its first position, without looking up, and grumbling with rage.

"I am glad not to be unknown to these gentlemen."

"Don Marzio," said the gamester, moving towards him, "will you lay aside your cloak? By my faith! it deserves to be well taken care of, for it looks as if it might be a gift from some Prince, Marquis, or, at least, *Count*."

Marzio looked at Olimpio a second time, but the latter remained immovable. Marzio then laid his cloak carefully aside, and sat down to play. As he was well versed in all the tricks of gamblers, and on the look-out, so it became a war between corsair and pirate, where nothing is sent but blank cartridges. The gamblers, accustomed to easy victories over Olimpio, this time were hardly able to get out of it even. Marzio, having remained a sufficient space of time, pretending he would continue to visit the place, retook his cloak and went away, leaving Olimpio deceived in his momentary expectation of being asked to make peace, and accept some dozen ducats for that evening. Marzio, considering the wild nature of this fellow, had been offended at it, and had resolved to spare himself the mortification of trying to mollify him; he thought to reach his home, pack his things, and start next day from Naples.

Olimpio, who kept angry as long as he hoped to be asked to make peace, was discouraged when he saw himself neglected; he then left the gambling house, hastening to rejoin Marzio. The gamester did not stay behind, but rushed after them, imitating the motion of a crow with clipped wings, leaping on its way, then stopping, turning its head suspiciously here and there, and then leaping again.

Marzio, hearing the hasty steps of some one behind him, placed his hand under his cloak to seize his poniard, and stopping suddenly, asked loudly :

“ Who goes there ? ”

“ It is I, Marzio ; do not be afraid ; I have not followed you for any bad purpose.”

“ Bad or good, it matters little to me. What do you want ? ”

“ Don’t get angry ; let us go on further, if you please ; we can talk more freely.”

And they continued their way, the gamester still following them.

“ Does it seem to you right,” began Olimpio, “ to leave me without a penny to buy a pipe ? You saved me from dying of starvation to die of thirst.”

“ Olimpio, I have told you a thousand times, that when you like you may come to my house, where there is plenty to eat and drink ; but I will never consent to your spending also my few ducats in wine, gambling, and worse things. You have had your share ; I have made the settlements with you, and proved that I am your creditor by more than two hundred ducats ; nor can you deny it. Now what right have you over my money ? ”

“ You taught me, that the want of right in bandits, soldiers, and great lords even, is no reason for preventing them, when they can, from taking the property of others.”

“ And that is right ; but I spoke of right, and not of force ; for I have as much force as you. Now, when forces are equal, the best thing is to put our hands in our pockets, and let our tongues quarrel.”

“ And does not the tongue wound more than the hands ? Where has the viper its strength ? Man sometimes resembles the viper.”

“ Leave out sometimes, and say rather, man resembles the viper—for I know it, and have tried it.”

“ Especially in some places, as in Naples, where a criminal judge rules with full power to discover crimes, granting rewards, and impunity to the informers.”

“ Of such judges there are enough everywhere ; but without the dolphins who lead the tunny fishes treacherously, the nets are drawn in vain.”

“ And you know, Marzio, that desperation often makes men worse than dolphins—it makes them sharks.”

“ I understand,” thought Marzio ; and then, with milder voice, added :

“ Olimpio ! Olimpio ! certain words which I heard from the gamester make me strongly fear that you have committed some great imprudence ; and then we should both be ruined.”

“ Yes, truly ! Do you suppose I am a child ?”

“ Do not dissemble, Olimpio ; for it may be our secret is no longer ours ; I have always been obliged to mend your imprudences ; think that it is a question of life and death.”

Olimpio made a little examination in a moment, and knew too well that Marzio was right ; and beginning to fear very much lest something might happen, said, with hesitating tone :

“ Now I remember rightly—truly—my dear Marzio—you must try to remedy this—but what could I do ? I was so mad ! I am afraid—that something—might have escaped from my mouth—which may make them believe—suspect—that we killed Count Cenci.”

“ Are you in jest ? Then we are lost.”

“ No—I am in earnest—but those who heard me seemed to be good sort of people. Still, if I had not spoken—if there was any means to make them forget—or at least if they would no longer speak.”

“ How ? Letters are sealed with wax ; mouths must be sealed with lead, like the bulls of the Pope !”

"Eh ! that would be the shortest way—and even steel would answer."

"So I think," said Marzio, and looked stealthily at Olimpio; but he thought he was on the look-out ; he listened, and heard not the least breath in the street ; for a beating pulse makes more noise than did the gamester with his measured steps. In the meanwhile they came before a shrine of the Madonna, where two lamps were burning. Olimpio, who was walking on the left of Marzio, raised his right hand to remove his hat before the Image ; and Marzio, taking this chance, turned suddenly upon his left side, and thrust his poniard, even to the hilt, in his breast. Olimpio fell, crying :

"Marzio, what are you doing ? Oh, Holy Virgin, help me !"

And Marzio leaned over him, saying :

"You condemned yourself, Olimpio, when you agreed that an open mouth ought to have an iron seal ; and would to God that this would be enough ;" and while he said this he continued to dispatch Olimpio with other blows. Thinking he was about to expire, he wiped the dagger on his clothes, and made the sign of the cross before the Madonna, saying :

"Of this blood I must render an account some day ; but thou, Mother of God, knowest if I shed it for myself ; if I had not done it he would have ruined whole families, and a maiden, who in her grief and beauty resembles thee, if not in glory."

And he continued his way as if he had been saying his prayers before the Image, and not committed a murder. Wicked, and most unhappy mixture of devotion and ferocity, alas ! too common in those times. Upon reaching his lodgings he packed his clothes, money, and everything carefully into his valise ; and later in the night, leaving the money for his lodging upon the table, went off to sleep somewhere else, with the intention of embarking at dawn the next day upon any vessel that might



leave the port. The gamester, who from a distance had seen the affray, rushed to Olimpio, and found him dying.

"Don Olimpio, did Don Marzio kill you, eh? for fear that you might reveal to the police that affair of the Cenci, eh?" And with eager curiosity he bent over him. To see such a wicked and malignant countenance at this hour, by the feeble light of the lamp over the dying man, one would have thought him the devil, who stood ready to seize his soul and carry it to perdition.

With a strong effort, Olimpio opened his eyes, heavy with death, and seeing the face of the gamester, shut them, groaning. The gamester said, quickly :

"Revenge ! Revenge ! If you wish to revenge yourself upon Don Marzio, reveal to me everything, for I am acquainted with the chief of police ; and I promise that before your soul reaches the other world, you will see that of Marzio following after."

Olimpio could see no longer, but he could hear ; so that recovering somewhat his senses, he knew the evil done, and acknowledged that Marzio was right ; he moved his lips, and muttered a few low words. The gamester kneeling, with both his hands resting on the pavement of the street, greedily inclined his ear to the mouth of the dying man to hear his words. He was able to hear them, and they were these :

"Ugly—Judas—Iscariot !"

In the meanwhile the gamester, in order to hear better, had inserted the edge of his ear within the mouth of Olimpio, who, shutting it hastily, bit it. Olimpio expired, the gamester screamed ; and they remained, one in the act of confiding, and the other of receiving the secret. Having recovered his ear from the teeth of the dead man, the gamester began to rub it softly to allay the pain ; then ran so swiftly, that he hardly seemed to touch the earth, to a certain dark lane in the midst



of the city ; and here, without using any caution, for the night, being very dark, did not permit any person to see him, he knocked in a particular way at the secret door of the back of a palace. The door opened and shut carefully, and quietly as the mouth of a fox which devours a chicken.

Next morning, before dawn, Marzio was on the wharf ; and not finding any other vessel ready to sail, except a felucca bound to Trapani, he soon made an arrangement with the master, and was about to mount on the deck of the vessel, and would have been saved, if his red mantle had not fallen overboard. It was necessary that some seamen should lower their hooks to fish it out ; not being able to catch it at first, they tried several times. Whilst they were thus fatally losing time, there appeared in the distance a crowd of policemen running straight towards the vessel. Marzio, with his sharp eyes, had already perceived the gamester ; and the latter, no less sharp-sighted, perceived the red mantle, and he who wore it. Marzio hastened to cry out to let the mantle go, and to weigh anchor without delay ; but it was too late.

“ Stop that vessel, by order of the Viceroy !”

The vessel was stopped, and the policemen, jumping on board, arrived in time to seize Marzio by the clothes, at the moment he was about to throw himself into the sea.

“ God wills it !” exclaimed Marzio, and allowed himself to be bound without resistance. In order not to have a crowd assemble, and make a disturbance at this early hour, the policemen, according to their usual custom of doing things quietly, threw over him the red mantle, after having drained it of the water, thus covering his fettered hands. A policeman on each side accompanied him, pretending to be servants ; the others followed at a distance.

The chief remained behind on the wharf, and cried :

“ Ship ahoy ! you can now go on your voyage.”

"Your Excellency ! the police have returned with the prisoner."

Thus a servant announced, who, in his face and motions, had something of the policeman and priest. These words, whispered through the crack of a door, awoke the Criminal Judge ; he dressed in haste, and entered his office. Having seated himself gravely in a high chair, the back of which rose one foot higher than his head, he immediately rung the bell.

The captain of police entered with Marzio, handcuffed, and covered with the red mantle.

"Captain Gaetanino," said the Judge, gravely, "conduct this man into the trial-room, and prepare the instruments according to law." The captain obeyed, the Judge followed, and sat in a solemn attitude before a long table, having at his side two notaries, and before him all the instruments of torture prepared. The executioner and two assistants were there awaiting his orders.

Marzio stood there impassible.

A notary began to interrogate him concerning his name and the circumstances of the crime of which he was accused. After the questions, the Judge read the following charges to him :

"Marzio Sposito, you are accused—*Firstly*, that, in company with your accomplice, Olimpio Geraco, you murdered barbarously, and with premeditation, the illustrious Count Don Francesco Cenci, a Roman nobleman, in Rocca Petrella, situated on the confines of this kingdom. *Secondly*, that you received the commission to kill him by *all* or *by some one* of the Cenci family. *Thirdly*, that as a price for the murder, two thousand sequins were paid to you ; of which one thousand were for yourself, and the other thousand for the aforesaid Olimpio. *Fourthly*, that you are also guilty of theft, by stealing from the murdered Count Cenci a red mantle embroidered with gold, which was found on your person at the time of the arrest. *Fifthly*, that in the past

night you treacherously murdered your accomplice, Olimpio Geraco, with a sharp and pointed instrument called a poniard, striking four blows, which caused the almost instantaneous death of the aforesaid Geraco. Upon these five charges, which I have read to you in a clear voice, and which, at your request, may be read anew, you are ordered to tell the truth in confessing them, after taking the oath ; and this, not because Justice has any need of other proofs, but for your good both in this life and the next, and to fulfill the orders of the law, which desires such admonitions. The notary of the court will now swear you."

The notary who sat upon the left, took a crucifix with such irreverence, that it seemed as if he might have been one of those who crucified our Saviour, and began the formula of the oath, saying :

" Marzio Sposito, swear by this image of our crucified Jesus."

" I will not swear."

" Why not swear ? Every one swears."

" And all falsely. Does it seem natural to you that I should willingly swear my ruin and death ?"

" But you will avoid the torture," observed the notary.

" You have no right to interfere," interrupted the Judge ;  
" he has the right to choose. Master Giacinto, execute your duty."

With the same accuracy with which an artisan gets ready to begin a delicate work, Master Giacinto, who was the executioner, assisted by his aids, undressed the poor man in an instant, tied him by the arms, and swung him in the air.

Marzio suffered these atrocious torments without uttering a moan ; only when they gently lowered him to the ground, his evil genius whispered in his ear : " Why do you live any longer ?" His memory presented before his mind, as through a mirror, all the vicissitudes of his life. Betrayed by his friends, persecuted by men in his dearest affections, these were changed into

scourges to his soul ; his passions bore the aspect of love. Filial love had made him a bandit ; the love for a woman, perfidious and dissimulating ; the love for Beatrice, a murderer. Of what nature was this last love ? He was not able to explain it to himself, since it made his thoughts turn to Annetta and end on Beatrice, or *vice versâ* ; thus wandered his soul from the desperate love to the impossible, and from the impossible to the desperate. His life, in the perpetual company of bitter cares, had become like the iron pressed upon the grindstone—it had been consumed, sending forth sparks. He felt no desire of anything. Truly, this mortal walk becomes too heavy when one does not know where or why tend his steps ! Often, in the bay of Naples, stretched on the sand, with his shoulders leaning against a rock, he had stood hour by hour to look upon the waves of the sea, full of weariness, since his corroding cares had more power to keep him absorbed within himself, than the beautiful bay to raise him with pleasing sensations. His limbs had become weakened ; he felt a cold perspiration upon his brow and hands ; an irresistible irritation in his throat obliged him often to cough. One day his mouth suddenly filled with a glutinous matter, which tasted like lead ; he spit it out—it was blood. He trembled from head to foot ; ran to a mirror and looked. Heavens ! what horror ! what a ruin of himself ! A crimson color had appeared for a short time on his cheeks, like a ray of the setting sun upon the last summit of the hills—a last adieu of the dying day ! Many times, with the edge of the razor to his throat, or the mouth of the pistol to his temple, he had been on the point of cutting short a life of misery and crime ; but he always wavered, excusing this hesitation by the desire of first seeing Beatrice happy ; in truth, however, this hesitation was owing to the animal instinct of life, augmented by weakness.

A great part of Marzio was dead ; a great deal of strength and courage escaped from the pores of his body by frequent per-

spiration. This trial, although supported with perseverance, had so dejected him, that he desired, as his best blessing, death, and a quick one.

The Judge, as soon as Marzio was placed in a seat, ordered :

“ Master Giacinto, in fifteen minutes you will repeat it ; in the meanwhile, if he wishes to drink, give him water and vinegar ;” and so saying, was about to depart.

“ Your honor !” called Marzio with a feeble voice, “ if I would confess, could I rely upon a favor ?”

“ I will do what I can,” said the Judge ; “ our Viceroy is very generous and magnanimous. Sir Notary, register that the accused has proposed to confess; *ergo*, the charges are true. This is a step acquired for the trial—go on.”

“ The favor which I would ask, is not, perhaps, what you imagine.”

“ What is it, then ?”

“ That as soon as I shall have confessed my sins, I may be executed.”

“ I will ask this of His Highness the Viceroy. Come, then, confess your crimes.”

“ How ! so soon ? Where is the priest ?”

“ This is not a sacramental, but a judicial confession.”

“ And what do you wish me to confess ?”

“ What I read to you before ; do you wish that I should read it again ?”

“ Oh, no ; it is all right ; I deserve death.”

“ Then you confess, and certify in full the charges against you ?”

“ Yes ; as you wish, provided you take my life quickly.”

The Judge then ordered the act of accusation to be closed with the necessary formalities ; he signed it first himself, then the two notaries, and put it into his pocket.



The Judge presented himself at the palace of Don Pedro Girone, Duke of Ossuna, Viceroy in Naples for Philip III., king of Spain. He was introduced into the room of his Secretary, and told him that he wished to speak to His Highness the Viceroy. The Secretary reported that important business prevented His Highness from giving an audience. The Judge then related the motive of his coming to the Secretary, who listened to him carelessly ; and, before he had done, took away the papers from his hands, and went away, saying, " I understand."

This is the important business with which His Highness the Duke of Ossuna was occupied. His Eminence, the Cardinal Zappata, had sent to him from Madrid a magnificent parrot, and he was playing with him ; not that Don Pedro was a lazy fellow, for he had the reputation of being very diligent in the affairs of the state, and he really was ; but it so happened that at that moment he had got a fancy for playing with the parrot, and did not wish to be disturbed. Besides, the bow, if continually stretched, breaks ; and a little relief is very acceptable even to the most laborious minds.

The Secretary entered suddenly, and surprised the Viceroy teaching his parrot—what was he teaching him ? A Spanish word, which no gentleman would proffer, and no lady listen to—although, pronounced by the parrot, it would excite the merriment of the ladies, and sometimes the blush, so that they would hide their faces behind their fans—some to blush, others to pretend it.

The Viceroy, displeased at being surprised at that moment, turned with an angry face to the Secretary, who, like a sagacious pilot of the coast, seeing the troubled sea, knew not what to do. However, he thought best to approach the parrot, but he, frightened, bit his finger. The Secretary murmured in an undertone :

" Curse him !" and in a loud voice, " A magnificent—a beautiful parrot !"



But the Viceroy, angry, asked him with a severe voice :

“Inigo, who has called you?”

“Your highness, the Criminal Judge wished to see you. I, knowing that you did not wish to be disturbed, took his papers, and came to bring them to you.”

“We know too well,” said the Viceroy, with lordly haughtiness taking the papers, “that we are denied what every one else has in plenty—a moment of rest. Don Inigo, say on.”

“Your highness, a bandit of the Roman State treacherously killed last night a companion of his, near the image of the Madonna of Buonconsiglio. This morning, being arrested, he confessed during the torture. The Judge, considering the spontaneous confession, is of opinion that he be condemned to death without further trial.”

“And is this the reason why you burst into my room unexpectedly, like a bomb-shell from an enemy’s fortress?”

“Your highness, be kind enough to remember that the fault is not in the ball, but in him who sends it.”

“You are never wrong ; you are like the assistants at the sacrifices of Jupiter, where one used to throw upon the other the fault of the killed ox, so that the punishment fell at last upon the knife, which, the most innocent, paid for all.”

The courtier, not to do worse, smiled ecstatically at this fine wit.

The Viceroy, flattered, taking a pen, was about to sign the sentence ; but he stopped.

“By St. Jago ! is it a mere nothing to sign a sentence of death ? There must be some difference between signing it and suffering it. To pass at once from one world where the splendor of the sun shines so luminously, into another, where the clearest thing which I comprehend is an eternal darkness—it seems to me a truly ugly passage ;” and here he dipped his pen into the ink. “I think,” he added, “that it must be more easy to weigh

the anchor of this life on a January day at Stockholm, than at Naples in an April day." He rose, approached the balcony, and, addressing the heavens, continued : " Eye of heaven, why dost thou appear so beautiful in our sight, if we must so soon leave thee ? Thy divine rays should illuminate things worthy of thy divinity. Night ought to see the punishment of crimes which are committed in its darkness ; and I do not know with what wisdom or justice we should sadden the day with the punishment of crime which it has not illumined : let both remain in the dark."

These thoughts escaped from the brains of the Duke, not from his heart ; he spoke them so as to make his Secretary forget the bad word which he was teaching to the parrot. These ideas were like the perfume burned around the bier to overcome the effluvia of the dead. He would have wished rather to vent his passion against some one, but fortune did not present any opportunity. In the meanwhile, the parrot, to increase his confusion and rage, repeated with loud voice the bad word learned, and seemed wishing to mock at him and his pretended philosophy. Then he sat down again in haste, and, to free himself from the importunate witness, was about to sign. " For, if this rascal deserves dismissal," thought he, " come, let us send him into eternity."

But the parrot, either struck by the novelty of the thing, or crossed because he was no longer petted, with his bill snatched the pen from the hands of the Viceroy.

" Montezuma does not wish that he should die ; or, rather, Montezuma reproaches the viceroy for signing sentences of death without even examining the papers of the trial. The parrot is right—the Viceroy wrong. Montezuma, thanks for your advice. If I were a king, who knows but, in reward for your long and honorable services, I would present you with a cross of honor ? But being only a viceroy, I will give you a whole sweet biscuit."

Don Pedro then began to read with attention the papers handed to him ; and after having perused them carefully, and considered for some time what would be necessary to do, said :

“ Don Inigo, Montezuma, with your permission, showed himself a great deal wiser than you in persuading me to read papers which you have not read, and which you should have done. This is an affair hardly begun, and we should only cut the thread and lose all traces of it. I don't see what prudence this would have been. It would be better to send this man to Rome, accompanied with a good escort, and with letters to conciliate his Holiness towards us. You will observe, that although this is a crime committed within our jurisdiction, still it seems to have been long before premeditated by persons of high rank residing in Rome. Henceforth, Sir Secretary, you must never bring me any documents without your previous accurate reading of them ; and let this be your rule for the future. Send the above orders to the judge ; and I hope that fortune may always be as good to us as to-day, in which she has spared us the signing of a sentence of death, and given us an opportunity of securing the encomiums and good will of the Holy Pontiff, of which wise kings have always need, as long as they wish to rule their subjects with absolute power.”

And all this because the Duke of Ossuna had been surprised teaching a bad word to the parrot ! Do you laugh, reader ? Oh, if this was a proper time to laugh, I would lead you into dark places where the destinies of the nation are discussed, and I would show that from smaller causes, often less honest, and sometimes more ridiculous, wars have sprung, ruin of states, destruction of nations, and other more fatal scourges of humanity.

The Secretary went out humbled, and gave the proper orders to the Judge, who had them immediately executed, sending Marzio, with a good escort, to the Governor of Rome.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TORTURE.

*Barbarigo.*

He shed

No tear.

*Loredano.*

He cried out twice.

*Barbarigo.*

A saint had done so,

Even with the crown of glory in his eye,

At such inhuman artifice of pain

As was forced on him ; but he did not cry

For pity : not a word nor groan escaped him,

And those two shrieks were not in supplication,

But wrung from pangs, and followed by no prayers.

BYRON, *Two Foscari*.

BEATRICE loved the sun of autumn, the rays of twilight, and the long shadows of the west. Often, in company with her sister-in-law, Lady Luisa, whom she now loved like a sister, and revered as a mother, she used to walk around Rome accompanied by two or more servants, according to the custom of the Roman noble ladies. One day, walking as usual, they entered the square Farnese ; continuing in the street of Corte Savella, they arrived at last in the Julian way. In the middle of this street, the eyes of Beatrice stopped to gaze on a building of mournful appearance—black, very large, without windows or any other openings, except the gate, which was so low that no one could enter without bending his body.

Upon the threshold of the door was sculptured in marble a bust of our Saviour, his arms extended, as if saying to the unhappy guest who entered there : “ When the anguish of suffer-

ing shall overcome thee, if thou art innocent, think of that which I, most innocent, suffered ; if guilty, consider that any moment thou mayest turn thy repentant heart to me ; I hold my arms open to clasp thee to my bosom."

Heavy clouds darkened the heavens, and the damp fog arising from the Tiber covered the whole building ; so that every projecting point was dripping. Beatrice stopped to look at this sad edifice ; and learning that it was the prison of Corte Savella, pressing the arm of her sister-in-law, said :

" Does it not seem to you that it weeps ?"

" Who ?"

" This prison."

" Certainly many must be the tears that are wept within it ; and if they had succeeded in piercing through the walls, I should not be surprised."

" And those greenish mosses, which thrust themselves through the cracks of the stones, and have found means to burst forth, do they not seem to be prayers of prisoners, that hardly escape from these walls ?"

" Too well they seem so ! And as those herbs remain attached to the walls of the prison to be blown by the wind or burnt by the sun, likewise the prayers are turned in vain to the passer-by to remind him of those who groan within, so that he may feel pity for them."

" Luisa, what are those baskets, hanging with twine from the walls to the ground, for ?"

One of the servants replied, that these belonged to the poor prisoners, into which any passer-by, who wished, could put his alms. The ladies, after looking about to see if any one observed them, took all the money which they happened to have, and divided it among the baskets.

" Not the money," observed Beatrice, " but the idea that some one is thinking of you, and helping you as he can, must be

a great consolation to the unfortunate. Nor should it be said that even the lightning is of no use ; since it is sometimes enough to lighten a dark place, and lead the wandering pilgrim from the precipice."

"Truly," replied Lady Luisa, "I can understand how consoling it must be in this living tomb to know that some one has pity for us—but I would not wish to try it."

"We are leaves in the wind of Providence ; and I, near these sorrowful walls, learn the reason why our Saviour enumerated the visit to prisoners among the deeds of charity. Look well, and you will see standing over the door of the prison, *Fear*, which repulses the visitor, and with trembling lips whispers, 'go away, lest the judge may suspect you an accomplice of the imprisoned one, and imprison you also ;' there is *Cowardice*, also, that calculating the chances, finds it better to go farther from the falling tree, and only return when it has fallen, to make a provision of wood to burn ; there is *Rigor*, with a heart of stone, which dissuades you from feeling pity for the guilty ones, because the imprisoned man is always thought guilty, and authority always infallible ; there is—but, alas ! if I should enumerate all the phantoms which stand crowded over the gate of the prison, menacing the visitors from afar, it would be too great an undertaking, and what is more, a very tiresome one ; hence it is no wonder that the prisoners usually pass their lives alone."

Thus sadly conversing, they returned home towards evening.

Don Giacomo, with his family, had come back to live in the ancient Cenci palace, and under this roof they all dwelt, some securely, some timidly, and Beatrice in her heart desolate ; and fearing some impending misfortune, although she did not show it.

The evenings in the Cenci's house were never passed without a number of relatives and friends, because of the many relations of the family, and its reputation for courtesy ; but on this evening it happened that no one had yet come, although it was



already late. The assembled family endeavored to keep up the conversation, but it often happened that a question remained unanswered, and the painful dialogues were cut short ; amusement became laborious ; every one wished to be alone and converse with his own mind ; but all being silent, they feared their own loneliness ; then was loudly heard the playing of the children, and it made them shudder like a burst of laughter at a funeral, so that each one began, with confused ideas, to divert his own painful thoughts. Lady Luisa began :

“Come, I notice that this evening the silent mood rules over us ; let us take Ariosto, and try to cheer our spirits with some of his wonderful fancies.”

“I, for my part, do not like him, on account of his style, rather mild than smooth,” observed Beatrice ; “and what is more, he is so light ; let us read Tasso instead, if you like.”

“I like that better,” added Don Giacomo, briefly.

“But you did not always think so ; for my part I never change, and as I once thought I think now of Ariosto ; fancies, strange things, loves, battles, good and bad passions, tears, smiles, earth, heaven and hell, all did that great genius sing ; whose genius like his so resembles nature, always varying and always beautiful ? You see him, like a summer cloud, emerging gaily with the evening breeze, and changing shape at every moment ; he leaps through a sea of pleasure, and, like the dolphin, at every motion of his scales, changes his color. Speaking of the poet, I almost feel myself becoming a poetess, for his verses, in passing through my memory, shake their wings impregnated with poetry. Tell me, if you please, is not Armida equal to Alcina ? Yes, certainly ; but in a poem so solemn as Tasso undertook to compose, this strong color offends ; while in the lively songs of Ariosto it delights and pleases ; add to it, also, the devils, witches, enchantments, and woods watched by female devils, as much as they please me in the Orlando, because they are so ap-

appropriate, so much the more they displease me in the Gerusalemme. Ariosto seems to me better advised than Tasso, since the first, in mocking these errors, tries to banish them from the minds of the people ; while the second, speaking earnestly, confirms them. Now, in solemn poems, the good poet ought to avail himself of religion purified of its vulgar errors, not to administer to the ignorant the evil for a medicine. We must believe in the devil, and may God save us from his temptations ; but we need not in the witch Armida, and the sorcerers Ismeno and Idraotte ; it is rather a sin. When I think that Tasso, in a religious poem, has given credit to these idle fables, I must acknowledge that he has not well deserved of humanity."

" Oh, Luisa, do you know that you defend your Orlando.

"" Come Orsa, che l' alpestre cacciatore  
Nella petrosa tana assalto abbia ?"

I give it up ; let us read then, if it please you, the history of Ginevra and Ariodante."

" Let us read it then," added Don Giacomo ; " although the other of Olindo and Sofronia seems to me much more sad."

" But we don't want melancholy things," exclaimed Lady Luisa ; " if we wished something of that kind there would be no necessity for leaving Ariosto. Can you point out a more pitiful story than that of Brandimarte and Fiordiligi, or the other of Zerbino and Isabella ?"

" You may be right," observed Beatrice, " but I can't help it. The story of Olindo and Sofronia moves me to tears as if the fact had really happened ; while the stories of Ariosto seem to me very fine imaginations ; and, besides, I am always fearful lest all at once they may take the fancy of making me laugh. But come, let us read of Ginevra."

Lady Luisa, somewhat proud of her victory, went to seek  
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the volume ; and opening it, placed it before Don Giacomo, saying :

“ You begin.”

Don Giacomo had hardly glanced at it, than he turned pale, and said, quickly :

“ No—no—it belongs first to you.”

“ I will begin, then ; but I have mistaken ; the story does not begin at the sixth canto, but at the fifth.” And turning several leaves of the book, she began in a fine style to declaim from the verse, *Tutti gli altri animai che sono in terra*, until the following :

“ ‘ Quel, dopo molti preghi, dalle chiome  
Si levò l’elmo, e fe palese e certo  
Quel che nell’ altro canto ho da seguire,  
Se grato vi sarà la storia udire.’ ”

Now I have read enough,” said Lady Luisa, pausing ; “ let some one else continue.”

“ Come, please, Luisa,” begged Beatrice, “ keep on ; for with your delightful voice you do the same justice to Orlando that a handsome dress does to beauty :

‘ Che spesso accresce alla beltà un bel manto,’

as your Ariosto says.”

“ What a flattering tongue ! But you should know that flattery is a sin, and one of the worst ones. But I will do it, not in reward for your praise, but to please you in this as in everything which I can.”

At this moment, a handsome young man with blue eyes and blond hair, being very intimate in the house, opened the door of the room, without being announced. He was dressed in a prelate’s dress ; he did not bow, but stood still and silently admired the group of heads ; a wonderful subject for the Flemish school, then in fashion.

Donna Luisa, not noticing the new arrival, with her fine voice continued :

“ ‘ CANTO SESTO.

“ ‘ Miser chi male oprando si confida  
Che ognor star debba il maleficio occulto ;  
Chè, quando ogni altro taccia, intorno grida  
L'aria e la terra stessa in ch' è sepolto :  
E Dio fa spesso che il peccato guida  
Il peccator, poichè alcun di gli ha indulto,  
Che se medesmo, senza altrui richiesta,  
Inavvedutamente manifesta. ’ ”

The prelate, hearing this, was about to retire unnoticed as he had come, but it would have looked improper in him to do so, and Don Giacomo gave him no time for it ; raising his head, he saw him, and cried :

“ Ah ! welcome, our Guido.”

“ You are having a literary club here ; but, be careful, for in Rome literary meetings never end well.”

“ There is no danger,” continued Don Giacomo ; “ we have here a family circle, and by your addition we still remain such, I hope.”

“ I hope so with all my heart ; and since it is so, be kind enough, Lady Luisa, to continue your reading.”

Indeed, Monsignore Guido Guerra was considered as being one of the Cenci family, because betrothed to Beatrice ; this news was soon spread among the young Roman noblemen, and they called him a fortunate man, and envied his happy state ; even at Court it was known, but the Pope was much incensed at it, both because he had selected him, knowing him to be very capable and of refined manners, to send as ambassador to some foreign court, and because he had not first asked his consent, or at least consulted him ; and it displeased him the more, hearing him proclaimed as the *fiancé*, and seeing him still in priestly

garments ; since one of the points most strongly contested among the Catholics and Lutherans has been, and still is, the celibacy of priests. Maffeo Barberini, a Cardinal of great influence, and very intimate with Guido, gave him warning of what was talked at Court concerning him, in order that he might govern himself accordingly ; Guido then, having inquired if the address of Beatrice to the Pope had been presented, and learning that it had not, was cautious enough to withdraw it from the office, fearing lest, coming to the knowledge of Clement, it would only excite a nature already too suspicious.

Guido, with easy familiarity, approached Beatrice to take her hand and kiss it ; but she, instead of giving it to him, resolutely rose, asking him to follow her. She led him into the alcove of the window, so that the ample curtains hid them completely.

They only remained there an instant, and then came out one after the other, with such an expression in their faces as to make one believe that, instead of having tied the chain of love, they had broken it violently, and forever. In fact, both of them felt their hearts bound ; both of them dragged a part of the chain, but still the links had been broken irreparably. A word of Beatrice had broken it as by a blow of an axe ; by accepting the hand of the murderer of her father, would she not be an accomplice of the parricide ? This she thought, and this was the word which she had spoken to her lover.

Guido, oppressed by sad emotions, stopped only a short time, then, making the excuse that some business called him elsewhere, left. Lady Luisa, noticing the confusion of the young man, and attributing it to one of those love quarrels which increase love, said, jokingly :

“ Beatrice, Beatrice ! do not be so hasty in throwing down the king of hearts ; remember that a card badly played, often makes one lose the game.”

Monsignore Guido had hardly turned the corner of the street, when he met one of his valets coming hastily to find him. As soon as the servant saw him, he said :

“ My Lord, His Eminence the Cardinal Barberini has sent a servant of the governor to the palace, to find you immediately, and give you this pair of spurs.”

“ Spurs ! And did he say nothing else ?”

“ Yes ; he said, that His Eminence having returned from the country, had found Monsignore Taverna awaiting him in his palace ; and after being closeted a long time with him, His Eminence had opened the door of the room, and, giving the spurs to the servant, saying, ‘ immediately to Monsignore Guerra ;’ had reëntered.”

Guido stopped a little to think ; then, as if struck by a sudden idea, exclaimed :

“ I understand !”

In the Cenci house, after having conversed for some time sadly, they became silent. The children had been put to bed, and a deep silence followed, only interrupted by the noise of the awnings upon the balcony, agitated by the evening breeze. Every one desired to retire, and yet, no one dared to propose it ; when all at once a low noise was heard—it increased—one could easily distinguish the trampling of a large number of men, mixed with the noise of weapons. Don Giacomo, rising with wonder and fear, went towards the door to see what was the matter. Hardly had he reached it halfway, when the doors were thrown roughly open, and a crowd of *sbirri* filled not only the room where the Cencis were, but the whole house. Some remained at the entrance of the door with drawn swords, to forbid any one to pass.

“ You are arrested by order of Monsignore Taverna.”

“ Why ?” asked Don Giacomo, with a voice which he endeavored in vain to render firm.



"That you will know at the proper time, in the examination. I am here only to execute orders. Lady Luisa may remain, I have no order to arrest her."

In the courtyard they found several carriages ready, with the steps let down ; they entered them by the uncertain light of the dark lanterns, and started for their place of destination, surrounded by a crowd of *sbirri*.

Guido saw the mournful procession pass ; and being told what had happened, overcome by passion, was about to rush forward himself, if his good servant, holding him by the arm, had not said :

"Monsignore, you lose yourself, and do not save them—when if free you may be of use both to them and to yourself."

Guido, repressing his passionate effort, exclaimed, groaning :

"Now let us see where fortune will lead us ;" and walked towards his home. Arrived within a short distance, he sent his servant ahead with caution to see if any *sbirri* were near. The servant returned and said there were none ; he then entered his room, wrote a most affectionate letter to his mother, in which he gave her notice of the impending danger, and that it was necessary for him to hide himself from the hands of justice without losing time. He begged her to accept this letter instead of an embrace or an adieu ; to hope for better fortune ; in whatever place he might be he would send her news ; and whatever might happen, she would always be in his heart, next to God. Then changing his clothes, and taking with him as much gold as he could carry, went out from the secret door of his palace, designing to go out of the city. He had not gone far before he met a band of *sbirri* going towards his palace, they passed near him, but in the dress in which he was disguised they did not recognize him. He saw, however, that the affair was becoming truly serious ; he dismissed his servant, and cautiously approached the gate Angelica ; but he retired very hastily, noticing from a

distance that some *sbirri* joined to the guards of the gate, examined minutely every one that went out. Now he began to wander about the streets of Rome, meditating now this now that design, without concluding upon any : thus walking, with his eyes on the ground, he perceived a light which came out from the cellars of a palace. Looking through the grating, he saw around a table a group of coalmen, who passed their time, as their fathers had done before them, and as their descendants will do, drinking and playing.

Guido, at once recollecting the innkeeper of Ferrata ; and also the watchwords he had given him ; descended into the cellar where the coalmen were. Here these men generally baptized daily their coal with a few buckets of water ; not to wash it from original sin, but to make it increase in weight : an honest custom, which is practised even now ; for all good things once discovered, it is right they should not be soon forgotten. The coalmen, although Guido appeared among them boldly, were astonished, but Guido reassured them saying :

“ Long live St. Tebaldo, and he who honors him.”

The coalmen looked each other in the face irresolutely. However, one of them, who was pleased with the aspect of Guido, said :

“ Praised be he ; but the labor of the coalman is great, the gain small.”

“ St. Nicholas protects the coalman, and his gains multiply.”

“ The coalman lives in the woods, and is surrounded by wolves.”

“ When the coalman joins in a league with the wolves, they can descend into plains where the flocks feed, and take the dwellings of the shepherds.”

“ Give me the sign.”

“ Here is the sign.” And it was three kisses : one on the forehead, one on the mouth, the third on the breast.

"All right ; you are one of us ; there can be no mistake about it. Still, it seems strange, since our society is mixed up of desperate people bound together by poverty, and by the need of defending themselves from the impositions of the powerful ; well, perhaps you also are one of the persecuted ones. What do you wish ? What do you desire ? But before saying any more follow me into a more secret place."

Guido thought he had misunderstood him, for he could not see in this cellar a hole big enough to enter anywhere ; however, he was soon undeceived, for the coalmen, clearing the heaps of coal and raising a stone from the pavement, opened the entrance to a lower and more secret passage. The coalman and Guido descended there by a ladder, and immediately he heard the stone replaced, and the coal heaped on the top again. In that room were collected goods and silver utensils of all kinds, and, according to the profanation of these kind of people, a lamp was burning before the image of St. Nicholas, venerated as the patron saint of robbers, and a great enemy of *sbirri*. The coalmen were from time immemorable in league with the bandits of the country, and served them as brokers in the city ; some of them exercised both trades at the same time. They transported the stolen things into the city, and here they would destroy the silverware, and by proper persons send it to the mint ; the goods they would entrust to some merchant friends of theirs of Civita-Vecchia or Ancona, who would export them by sea to Naples, Venice, or the East ; whence it would sometimes happen that a Venitian gentleman would find in some second-hand clothing shop of Naples his cloak lost in the Roman Campagna, and a Neapolitan Baron would see himself served in the hotels of Verona or Padua with the table-cloth and napkins lost in passing through Terracina. Several by this dishonest traffic had grown very rich, and were spoken of openly ; but the police could not prove any charges against them, and those enriched lost no credit

by it ; but rather, by means of their acquired wealth, they would procure illustrious marriages for their children, good employments, and honors. The citizens would murmur for eight or ten days, not on account of their honesty, but rather for envy, not being able to do as much ; then they would be silent ; and when they met such kind of nobles, were the first to take their hats off, and call them your Excellency. The ancient nobles would openly pretend to despise them ; but in secret they flattered them, and would borrow money ; and so in those olden times things went on in this world. To-day, however, things go differently :

*"E s' egli è vero, il fatto nol nasconde."*

Guido related to his new friend the danger in which he was, and asked advice and help. It was the custom of the coalmen to move twice a week ; when one caravan came into the city with the load, the other started for the country. The coalman who was talking with Guido had arrived on that very morning, and would depart from Rome in three days, towards evening. So he said to him :

"To-morrow I will send out of Rome some one of our companions to see if there is anything new. You must shave your beard and cut your hair ; dress in some of our clothes, and of the worst kind ; we will dye your skin with a certain herb, and blacken your face with coal dust, so that you will not even recognize yourself. We have among us a companion who limps ; he will teach you to imitate him in voice and motions. To-morrow, at day-light, you must go with two donkeys to sell coal about the city ; if they call to buy of you, a few words are enough ; because the bags contain just two hundred pounds, and the price is fixed at half a ducat a bag ; you may also put a little stone in your mouth, and pretend to be chewing ; in this way your cheeks will swell out, and so you will be better dis-

guised. The people will mistake you for the lame fellow ; at any rate, they will soon get accustomed to the sight of you, and thus I hope to get you safely out of Rome."

As among such sort of people deeds are more than words, in a short time Guido was transformed by the coalman in the way he had described ; and the next morning, one of the handsomest among the young noblemen of Rome might be seen changed into a coalman, in the streets selling coal, with a piece of coarse bread and an onion in his hand, pretending to eat ; from time to time he would cry out with a wonderfully shrill voice : Danger teaches so well and in such a short time !

When the appointed day came, the coalmen went out without detention from Rome, and Guido with them. On the road they met a company of *sbirri*, returning from a search into the country ; and some of the coalmen having asked of the chief, as is customary among good friends, what news there was, were answered with : " We went out on a hunt, but the fox smelt the ferret, and by this time is many miles off."

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The carriages containing the Cenci family stopped. The door of the one in which Beatrice was, opened, and she was ordered to alight ; and while obeying the command, her foot on the steps, by the red light of the lanterns that the jailer and his assistants carried, she met, face to face, the marble image of the Saviour, which she had noticed a few hours before over the gate of the prison Corte Savella. The afflicted girl stretched her arms towards him, exclaiming in a transport of grief :

" My God, have mercy upon me !"

And alighting, she bent her body to enter the gate of the prison. When she turned her head to see her friends, they were already far from her, and between them a sea of armed men was



interposed ; like shipwrecked mariners divided by the waves, sending to each other a sad salute, she gave a cry which resounded painfully from corridor to corridor through the immense prison.

They made Beatrice pass through long galleries, ascend and descend stairs ; then, at the end of a vaulted room, they opened a door and pushed her in ; the door was immediately shut loudly, the bolts drawn, and doubly locked with a key, and she found herself in a cold, dark, and damp room ; a true hell for the living. She did not move a step ; she knew not where to turn ; she recalled to her mind certain stories told of traps, by which, in those times less hypocritical, but not less wicked than our own, they used to make away with those whom they dared not condemn, either because not guilty, and still hated, or because too powerful. She was afraid, and stood firmly near the wall.

Suddenly the door opened with the usual noise, and a crowd of ugly men broke within, busy in bringing water and some coarse utensils for the first necessities of life. They offered her no consolation—said not a word ; jailers and assistants returned as they had come, noisily shutting the door.

Beatrice had perceived on what side the bed of boards was ; she groped her way to it, and sat on the extreme edge, like the statue of sculpture which we admire on the tomb of Michelangiolo ; and here she remained in sorrowful silence. All at once she was startled by a horrible rumbling over her head ; she listened, and it seemed to come from a door being shut and bolts violently drawn. Assured that it was nothing worse, she quieted herself ; when again the door of her prison was opened, and the same men as before entered, busily bringing a straw bed, a woollen covering, and other articles, and went out as they had come, fiercely and savagely. Then Beatrice laid herself down upon the straw bed without a desire for anything, exhausted, stupidly impassible ; she shut her eyes, but could not sleep ; her heart was oppressed,



but she could find no way of giving vent to her feelings, although the tears escaped from her eyelids, slowly, slowly, like a spring of water that starts out from under a stone. Her power of thinking, like the sun without rays, stood still within her brains, powerless, but burning. In addition to her anguish, she heard through the entire night a groaning, which by degrees became more feeble, as of a person in pain, and she also thought she heard the prayers of the dying ; nor was she deceived, for in the cell next to hers, that same night, an unfortunate prisoner passed to a better life. Deliberate malice, or cruelty of the mind equal to any ever planned either on earth or in hell, had presided over the arrangements of this prison ; and, as if the above-named tortures were not enough, ten hammers struck upon the bell, and more upon the brain of poor Beatrice, the quarters, the halves, and the whole hours ; at twelve o'clock one hundred and twenty blows were struck ; it was enough to make one crazy. Later, when Beatrice asked for what reason such tremendous peals were rung, she was answered quietly : " First, because the Superintendent of the prison had ordered it ; and since he had ordered it, there must have been some reason for it ; and then, in regard to the noise, the Superintendent had said that the prisoners would get used to it, and in the course of time the bells would conquer the nerves of men." Nor did the torments end here ; when, after a painful watching, Beatrice towards daylight had closed her eyes, three bells began to ring joyfully, and immediately after, the insupportable jarring of three hundred and more bolts drawn followed, as many doors then opened, and a hateful jingling of innumerable keys knocking against each other. Then arose a mournful singing of discordant voices, that screamed out the litanies like the music of the saw sharpened by a file, or the scraping of marble ; the litanies ceased ; again the three hundred doors shut, and the three hundred bolts were drawn, and the shaking of the bunches of keys. These things happened

amid a dense darkness, so that Beatrice was ignorant whether she had lost her sight, or whether they had condemned her to eternal darkness. This doubt, however, was solved, for a little after a heavy noise over her head frightened her, and immediately after a somewhat grey light penetrated into the prison. On rising, half stupidly, and frightened, into a sitting posture on her bed, she looked around the chamber in which she had been confined ; it was a cell, about six or seven feet square, with a lofty ceiling, the middle of which ascended into a sharp point ; in the upper part of this a hole was visible, grated with large iron bars, from whence, however, the sky could not be seen, for it opened into a window which took its light from another. In this butcher-house of human flesh, an August noon seemed like a December evening, and an evening of December like one of the evenings of the Northern-land. Beatrice knew then that there were two infinite evils : perdition in the future, and ingenuity of man in contriving sufficient means for afflicting his fellow-man in the present. She bent down disconsolately her head, thinking of the destinies of that fierce race who boast of being created in the image of God.

A little later, they brought to her some coarse bread, sour wine, and a disagreeable soup, upon which floated pieces of fat meat and herbs. She tried once more to look on the faces of her jailers. To what species of animals they belonged, who can tell ? One of them looked like the Egyptian hieroglyph, which presents a human form and a vulture's head ; the other, more hideous still, for a malignant disease, increased by continual drunkenness, had thus disfigured his face : instead of eyes, one would have thought he had cypress berries in his head, they were so cold and expressionless ; his ears were a true labyrinth of pity, for the groans of the afflicted were either lost, or devoured by a more cruel beast than the Minotaurus—his evil soul. It rarely happens that in beautiful things, however handsome

they may be, all parts harmonize perfectly among themselves ; but in this sad prison all agreed, both men and things, with wonderful symmetry. So much more numerous in this world are the ugly and wicked than the beautiful and good.

Sometimes, for amusement, we imagine we see upon a dark wall a number of frightful and grotesque figures ; so on that day, before the amazed eyes of Beatrice, horrible figures were seen. Half an hour after these men had disappeared, there entered the prison, preceded by the usual unbolting, a man very finely dressed, with large ears, like a sea shell, a flat nose, and large projecting lips, like those of a monkey. He diligently examined the walls, the pavement, and the window, and cast a glance on Beatrice also ; he alone showing her a ray of compassion. Just as he was leaving the cell, she heard him say :

“ This prison certainly cannot be called healthy, and, besides, it is too dark ; you will transport number one hundred and two to number nine, and furnish the room with suitable articles ; for food, give her everything she may desire, within the limits of temperance, of course—do you understand ? Neglecting this, you shall be punished with two blows of the rope, or more. Do you hear ? ”

Thus humanity itself assumed the appearance of ferocity and contumely. However, Beatrice thought that this person, whom afterwards she found to be the Superintendent of the prison, had given in a loud voice these orders, so that they might reach her ear, and comfort her ; she therefore recommended him to God, having no other means of expressing her gratitude.

The removal took place as had been commanded, and Beatrice had in her new cell a piece of white bread, and a ray of pure sun ; with these human creatures can at least live, or await until the axe or affliction shall kill them.

For three days Beatrice was left in peace, if it could be called peace ; the fourth day, towards nine o'clock, new faces

appeared ; they were those of two men dressed in black ; one remained a little distance behind, and she hardly saw him ; he seemed of savage mien ; the other, of light complexion, with a forehead like porcelain, and half-shut eyes, appeared a compassionate man, at least by his frequent sighing, and the crossing of the fingers of one hand upon the other, as if praying. This man introduced himself as the physician of the prison ; he questioned her particularly about her health, examined her attentively, consulted her pulse, her tongue, and so on ; then he congratulated her on her good constitution, offered her snuff from a box, upon the cover of which was represented a beautiful miniature of the Heart of Jesus ; exhorted her to be of good cheer, for her sorrows would soon cease ; and also added, that she might ask of him anything she might wish ; then, after recommending her to the great Mother of God, went out.

“ And this gentleman also seems kind,” exclaimed Beatrice, consoled.

“ Although at the first sight,” said the doctor, in the corridor, to the criminal notary, for such was his companion, “ I was fully convinced that there was no need of it, still, I wished to examine her carefully, for, you understand, humanity precedes all things—and the soul is of importance.”

“ Yes, I understand !—the soul, and the body also—of course !—and you can assure her, eh ?”

“ Certainly able, most able to sustain the torture. Her pulse beats regularly, and gives no indication of weakness—so you see.”

“ Of course ; but for the sake of formality, you will be kind enough, most excellent doctor, to give me the usual little certificate, in order to file it in the process, and proceed with all legal forms prescribed by the reigning laws.”

“ Willingly, most illustrious Sir Notary ; these scruples honor you ; we must consider that one day posterity will read this

trial, and it is important that they should see with how much regularity and regard we worked for the sacred rights of humanity."

"And justice," added the notary ; "thank God, we do not live in barbarous ages."

Even these men thought they were civilized, and boasted of it. The notary, with the certificate of the doctor in his hand, went into the room of examination.

This was an immense hall, and, perhaps, had once been an oratory ; at one end, over a platform of wood, stood the bench of the judges, covered with black cloth ; the leather of the high chairs was also black ; behind the head of the presiding judge hung from the walls an immense black crucifix, carved in wood ; and one could not have been able to judge whether it stood there to console or to frighten the unfortunates brought before it, so fierce-looking had it been sculptured.

As none of the judges had yet made their appearance, the good notary, who might have boasted of being Order itself, began to arrange things in order ; he placed the big chairs with symmetry ; laid upon the table before the President the certificate of the most humane doctor, and the hour-glass ; replaced in their usual places the large candlesticks of brass, cleaning the yellow wax from the droppings, and put between them the bronze crucifix, upon which the accused and the witnesses swear to confess the truth. This crucifix had often been heated, and presented to those accused of heresy to be kissed ; so that, letting it fall to the ground with fear, the double proof of their abhorrence for the Redeemer, and the Redeemer for them, would result. O, Lord ! if Thou hadst not been nailed to the cross, how Thou wouldst have used thy hands, hearing thyself so often and so shamefully perjured ! Nor did the methodical notary stop there, for he also arranged the inkstands and papers ; cut the pens ; looked at them against the light to examine whether the



points were even, and then cut them straight ; and put them aside, one after the other, like arrows, ready to be fired against St. Sebastian bound to the post.

A little distance from the bench, a strong balustrade of iron separated this space from the remaining hall ; and here might have been seen another man, also preparing the instruments of his profession, as by virtue of sympathy ; and this was Master Alessandro, the celebrated executioner of Rome. Master Alessandro was powerfully proportioned ; muscular like an Athlete ; his skin was of an olive color, or rather bronze ; his hair crispy, and black ; his eye-brows straight and falling over his eye-lids, so that his burning pupils appeared from out his disordered hair like fire amid thorns ; his lips were very small, and compressed, partly by nature and partly by the long habit of being silent ; very minute wrinkles crossed his brow ; whether years, or internal commotions, had sown them so thickly, no one knew, or cared to know ; for his years, even, were a mystery ; and several decrepid old men could tell of a certain Master Alessandro, who was executioner in the time of their infancy ; he might have been his father, or grandfather ; but the common people believed him the same man ; and this only increased their fear of him. On the whole, his face showed harshness, rather than brutality ; of a degenerate type, but still a Roman one.

In the room were several poles, with a transversal arm, and on the ends of the latter hung blocks with bronze wheels, and ropes adapted to draw up weights ; on the ground lead weights were scattered, which were fastened to the feet to give the torture of the rope with a hard shake ; and many other instruments of torture. Master Alessandro passed them all in review before him ; put them in proper order ; cleaned some of them from certain black spots, which human blood had left red. The notary and the executioner, each on his side, prepared to celebrate becomingly the judicial solemnity.



In the meanwhile, another notary and two judges arrived ; who, after having exchanged the usual salutations, and spoken at length of the weather, the season, their health and that of their families, Cesare Luciani, a very ugly man, with a head which looked like a basket, a face of greenish hue, said that the chill air had increased his gout and cough ; and the notary, Ribaldella, who considered him as a protector, cautioned him with a sad voice, to have a care of his precious life. He, grumblingly, answered :

“ We will try to—we will try to, Giacomino ;” and we cannot say whether he said this through wonder, fear, or satisfaction that there lived a human being who felt, or feigned to feel, an affection for him.

Another judge (and this one had the reputation of being very kind-hearted), so red in his face that he looked like a pitcher of wine left through carelessness upon the dinner-table of Lady Justice, with staring round eyes, interrupted the conversation by narrating how he had been obliged to sit up all night on account of his dog, who was sick, and :

“ What can I do ?” he added ; “ this is all my own fault ; I am tender-hearted ; I really was not born to be a criminal judge.”

And the flatterer Ribaldella :

“ Your Honor, he who does not love animals does not love men.”

“ Certainly, Giacomino ; last night,” Judge Luciani said, between one cough and another, “ last night four murders and six robberies were committed. We are upon the tracks of certain witches ; and if we put our hands upon them, I can tell you that we will make a famous trial of it. These trials, thank God, grow more common every day, and soon we shall have some other Giordano Bruno sent to the flames. I can tell you, that I never saw a more beautiful fire than that of these philosophers ;

so, Giacomino, study to become expert, you know. The devil never fails to cut wood for the judge who wishes the kettle to boil."

"It seems impossible! You know everything, you are informed of everything—one cannot tell how the deuce you do it! Eh! such energetic men like you will never be born again," cunningly observed Ribaldella. And Luciani:

"It is a passion that I had even from a boy; but you see, I pay for my curiosity with the gout."

"Will you take some snuff?" interrupted the notary, a friend of Order, whose name was Bambagino Grifi, vainly displaying a magnificent snuff-box.

"Beautiful! Splendid!" exclaimed the bystanders. "This is a new one. How many have you collected, now?"

"I only need a dozen more to make three hundred and sixty-six, when I shall stop. His Eminence, the Cardinal Palletta, for all his labor, has only reached three hundred; and then, save the respect due to him, he buys them like a cat in a bag, and, I was about to say, like kettles, provided they appear of different form; but I, no sir; provided they are not historical snuff-boxes, and are not accompanied with the authentic certificates of their celebrity, although they were of gold or silver, I would not deign to class them in my collection. I possess one—one only, which I would not exchange for the button on the cope of His Holiness—you laugh! It was used by the glorious Emperor, Charles V., when in the convent of St. Juste, and I was able to get it from a religious monk of the order of Girolamini in exchange for the nose of St. Serapione, a pious relic preserved, *ab antiquo*, in the Grifi family. And this one—whose work do you suppose it is? Listen! no less than the work of Benvenuto Cellini."

"Master Alessandro, have you oiled the rope?" asked Judge Luciani, tired of this, to the executioner, who, with his head, nodded yes.

"Observe," continued the notary Grifi, exultingly, "the wonderful skill, and the delicate workmanship of Benvenuto. And to whom do you think it belonged? I will tell you. To Monseigneur Duke Henry of Guise, and I had it from a certain father of the Minor Observers, who gave him the extreme unction at Blois, although he found him already dispatched for the next world with more than fifty wounds. Now I will tell you the way I came into possession of such a treasure."

"His Honor the Lord Chief Justice," cried an usher, opening the door; and all, stopping their conversation, turned towards the newly arrived.

Ulisse Moscati advanced with heavy and slow steps. His manner did not come from an insulting and vain pride; in spite of the long exercise of his most unfortunate profession, whenever he approached the judges' bench he had always felt a sort of shudder. He held his head bent, and his eyes fixed on the ground; groaning within his soul, he sought there the objects of his tenderness, his affectionate wife and young daughter, who, following her mother to heaven, had left him alone upon the earth; and on account of his failing years he felt greater the need of consolation. He seemed hardened in face, nor could he have been otherwise; but under this icy crust tears fell, which, unwept, bitterly returned to overflow his heart. By nature he was inclined to compassion; family reasons had obliged him to exercise an office from which he revolted; and thus, between doing a thing and abhorring it, he had reached that part of life where, the vigor of mind extinguished, habit takes the place of the will; now he failed in strength to discard his old habit, and, like the greater part of tired men, allowed himself to be carried by the current of external events. Hesitation of will, inaction of affections, satiety of everything, rendered him fastidious to himself and to others; he felt a great desire for peace, but knew not where to find it, nor whence it would come to him. A pas-

sive state, which a falling leaf, a flying butterfly, a sudden sound, and other like circumstances, might determine to an extreme resolution. He had the reputation of eminent legal wisdom in his time, and he deserved it ; since, at that time, everywhere, and particularly in Rome, a knowledge of scholastic sophistries was called science. Truly, a little and servile learning always pleased priests, when, in universal ignorance, it was able to administer a foundation for their most tenacious and importunate cupidity, availing themselves of the credit and honor which accompany it ; they hated the liberal and generous, however, for they feared the flight of thought, if first, binding a cord to its foot, they had not one end grasped in their hands. Hence the priests, in the universal darkness, held a lighted lantern, which would shed sufficient light around to illuminate them on their way ; when, afterwards, there arose in the world that light which should shine over all, they gathered together in dismay and blew it out ; they used their infant learning as a means to stifle the more advanced learning of others, through envy, or far worse motives. Thus, when the light of the universe rose, that of Rome declined to its setting. Humanity walks towards the East, Rome to the West ; and at every step which they move, it renders their separation more wide and irrevocable.

Judge Moscati, having saluted his colleagues and minor officers courteously, took his seat on the bench, where the first thing his eyes fell upon was the certificate of the physician regarding the state of Beatrice's health ; he read it twice, then said, quietly :

"It seems, then, that if there should be any need of it, we can, without any scruples of conscience, subject this unfortunate girl to the torture."

"Certainly," replied Judge Luciani, coughing ; "precisely so."

"I doubt, however, whether it may be applied to her legally.

because the accused is but little over fifteen. Upon which I desire to learn your opinions, gentlemen."

"For my part, I am fully convinced," began Luciani, "and have no doubt at all. I will say, however, in all conscience, and in conviction of what I feel to be the truth, if we consider the right, by common consent we find it established that age is of no account in cases *atrocioribus*; and since parricide is a most atrocious and dreadful crime, in full conscience we can then omit in this trial the rules of an ordinary process. Besides, gentlemen, malice in woman is earlier shown than in man, like puberty; in fact, the law considers a woman of age at eleven years, man at fourteen; nor is the question of malice to be solved according to the age, or by abstract presumption, but according to the proof of the facts; for these reasons the solemn judges of the ancient Areopagus wisely condemned to death the boy, thief of the golden crown of the temple of Minerva, for having known how to distinguish the leaves of the true laurel from the leaves of gold; and for my part, I think, and you all, my honorable colleagues, will be persuaded, that a greater depravity than that shown by these most wicked children, in the murder of their father, would be very difficult not only to find, but even to imagine. If, then, we wish to abide by the law, there can be shown a number of instances in which the age was no obstacle; among which I am pleased to record the one which gave occasion to Sixtus V., a truly great Pontiff, to proffer golden words. Monsignore, the Governor of Rome, caused the Pope to consider, with due respect, that the Florentine boy, guilty of resisting the police of Trastevere, could not be condemned to death, as he desired, because he was not of the age established by law. 'If he needs nothing but years,' replied the blessed Sixtus V., 'you may let him be executed, for we can give him ten of our own.'"

Then Valentino Turchi, collateral judge, who presented all



the appearance of a butcher's dog with spectacles, affirmingly observed :

" And I add this observation, that it was not an atrocious crime."

" Very just consideration," added the old Luciani, feeling a kind of remorse for not having expressed it in his own speech.

Luciani according to the justice of those times, was perfectly right. The justice of to-day too truly seems injustice to-morrow ; it also changes from one place to another, and such a one is condemned in Florence, who would be acquitted in Paris. Men who judge will not be persuaded of this : and truly if they were to think upon it twenty-four hours a day, it would not be enough. Chief Justice Moscati could not find any good reason to oppose ; so looking down he ordered :

" Bring in the prisoner Beatrice Cenci."

And she was brought in. Surrounded by guards and immediately turned towards the bench of the judges, she did not perceive the mournful instruments with which the hall was hung. Those present fixed their eyes eagerly upon her ; and, struck by her divine appearance, wondered how so much depravity of mind could be accompanied by such beauty of form. All thought so, except two alone, who had the courage to think her innocent ; and these were Judge Moscati and the executioner Alessandro.

The notary Ribaldella soon began to question her about her qualities, and she replied neither timidly nor boldly, but properly, like one who felt the dignity of her own innocence.

" Swear her," ordered the chief justice,

And Ribaldella, seizing the crucifix in such a manner, that he appeared rather to wish to knock her upon the head, than to present it to her to fulfill a solemn rite, said :

" Swear."

Beatrice extending her soft white hand, said :

" I swear upon the image of the Divine Redeemer, who was



crucified for me, to tell the truth, because I know, and can say it ; if I could not, or would not, I would have abstained from swearing."

"And this justice expects from you. Beatrice Cenci," the chief justice began, "you are accused, and the proofs in the trial show it sufficiently, to have premeditated the murder of your father Francesco dei Cenci; with the connivance of your mother-in-law and brothers. What have you to answer?"

"It is not true."

And she pronounced these words with such sincere simplicity, that St. Thomas himself would have been satisfied ; but Judge Luciani growled between his teeth :

"It is not true, eh?"

"You are accused, and the proofs in the trial show it sufficiently, that you have, in company with the above-mentioned relatives of yours, conferred a commission on the bandits Olimpio and Marzio, to kill Count Cenci, with the promise of a reward of eight thousand golden ducats ; of which one half should be paid upon the spot, and the other half after fulfilling the crime."

"It is not true."

"Wait a minute and we will see whether it is true or not ;" murmured Luciani.

"You are charged, and from the trial it is sufficiently proved, that you gave to Marzio, in addition to the prize, a red mantle embroidered with gold, which had belonged to the deceased Count Francesco Cenci.

"It is not so. My father gave that mantle to Marzio his valet, before he started from Rome for Rocca Petrella."

"You are charged, and from the trial it appears sufficiently proved, you have caused the paternal murder to be committed at Rocca Petrella on the ninth day of September in the year one thousand five hundred and ninety-eight, and this by express command of Lucrezia Petroni your mother-in-law, who prevented its

being committed the eighth day on account of its being the festival of the blessed Virgin. Olimpio and Marzio entered into the room where Count Francesco Cenci slept, to whom had been given wine with opium ; and you, in company with Lucrezia Petroni, Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci, awaited in the ante-room the consummation of the crime. The ruffians having returned back frightened, you asked them "what was the matter?" to which question they having replied that they did not feel courage enough to kill a man while asleep, you reproached them with these words : "How ? if prepared you are not able to kill my father sleeping, imagine if you would dare to even look in his face if he was awake ! And to come to this conclusion you have already received four thousand ducats ? Now then ; since your cowardice is such, I myself with my own hands will kill my father, but you will not live long." Upon which reproach and menace the ruffians reëntered the room where Count Francesco Cenci lay, and one of them putting a great nail over his eye, the other drove it first into his head, and then into his neck, which caused the death of the above said Count. The assassins having received the remainder of their price departed ; and you, in company with your brothers and mother-in-law dragged the body of your dead father over an old parterre, from which you precipitated it upon an alder tree. What can you answer ?"

"My lords ! I reply that so many charges of such horrible atrocities would more properly belong to a pack of wolves, than to me. I deny them with all the power of my soul."

"You are accused, and the trial shows it, that you consigned to Laurenza Cortese, nicknamed *la Mancina*, a sheet drenched with blood in order that she might wash it; and are also accused of having caused Olimpio to be killed by the bandit Marzio, for fear that the former might reveal the crime to justice. Answer."

"Am I allowed to speak ?"

"Rather it is imposed upon you to do so ; speak openly all

that may be of use to enlighten justice, and defend yourself from the accusation."

"My lords ! That I was not educated to such horrors there is no need of my saying ; I will speak to you sincerely as my heart dictates, and you will excuse my insufficiency. I am but sixteen years of age ; I was educated by my most pious mother Lady Virginia Santacroce, and by Lady Lucrezia Petroni, a lady well known for her piety ; neither my years, nor the teachings of others could persuade any one to suspect me guilty of the atrocious crimes which could hardly be equalled by the Locustes, and other famous criminals, who still were hardened to crime by degrees. Granting even that nature wished to create in me a prodigy of wickedness, consider, if you please, that such an atrocious disposition could not have been so concealed, but that it must in some measure have appeared a novice at least, before it was deeply rooted in the path of wickedness. What I may have been, and how I have lived, it will be easy for you to ascertain by asking any of the friends, relatives and servants of the house—My life is a book composed of but a few pages ; turn them over, read them attentively, and wholly. If I am not mistaken, it seems to me that in order to judge human actions with discretion it is necessary to find out the causes, which may have induced them. For what end then do you imagine that I was urged to so enormous a crime ? For desire of money ? But the greater part of the property of the Cenci family is entailed, and goes to the eldest. The benefices, prebends, and such other offices cannot be inherited by women. It was unknown to me, that my deceased father had disposed by will of his free estates in favor of pious places : dying a violent and sudden death, I must have supposed him intestate ; and from this property likewise, as a woman the laws would have excluded me. My property comes to me from my mother, which my father could not take away ; and, between dowry and overdowry, I have heard that

it amounts to about forty thousand ducats : thus you see, that avarice could not have invited me to it. I do not deny, I rather confess, that my father made me pass days full of bitterness, and—but religion forbids children to turn back and look at the paternal tomb to curse it, therefore I abstain from saying too many, and unworthy words about this : be this enough, that wishing to escape from daily torments, and procure a less sad life, among bad counsels that of parricide would seem to be the worst ; for beside eternal perdition to the soul in the next world, it is full of remorse, dangers and fear in this. Domestic examples were not wanting of plans well contrived, which would teach me a way of defending myself from paternal persecutions. Olimpia, my eldest sister, had recourse to the benignity of His Holiness, and by means of an humble address obtained honorable marriage with Count Gabrielli of Agobbio : and as she taught me I did, writing a supplication, and I intrusted it to Marzio, trusting he would be able to present it at the office of the memorials.”

“Do you know, whether your supplication was presented ?”

“Sir, I recommended it to Marzio to have it delivered.”

“And why did you trust Marzio with such an important commission ?”

“Ah ! my father kept me shut up ; so that, excepting Marzio, in whom alone my father trusted, I was not allowed to speak to any other person.”

“Continue.”

“And supposing that nature had given me the brutality, my father the motive, and the devil the occasion to commit the crime, tell me, can you imagine a more absurd manner to accomplish it than that which the accusation depicts ? why use an iron nail ? with eight thousand ducats one could easily buy poisons which kill like the apoplexy, or destroy like the consumption, without leaving any traces to the investigations of justice ; but what do I say of poisons ? The accusation says that I did procure them ;

and not only procured, but administered them : then if I gave to my father the wine and opium to make him sleep for one night, it would have been easy enough to increase the dose in order that he might never awake in this world. What need was there of so many dangerous operations ? What need of assassins ? What need of so many accomplices, often traitors, always fatal ? And above all, what need, what good was there to call into the secret of the plot Bernardino, a boy twelve years old ? What aid could he have been to us, or rather, in how many ways could we not expect him to be of injury to us ? If in the house of Cenci there might have been an infant, the accusation would have held him also as an accomplice ; as if, tired of maternal nourishment, with cries and complaints he desired to be nourished with his father's blood ? These seem to me, and are, absurdities. Don Giacomo, when the sad accident happened, was in Rome, and he can give a sufficient proof of this. I have told you in regard to the mantle. Of the sheet it may be so ; I heard it said at the time, and I will add that the washer-woman merely confessed that a woman of about thirty years consigned it to her : now neither am I thirty years old, nor do I look so, at least I did not look so before having gone through so many sorrows ; and the place where the washer-woman asserted it was spotted, excludes the suspicion that it came from the head of a person lying down. My lords ! you are able men, and versed in these matters ; therefore I do not doubt that you will refuse to believe such knavery. What need was there of the nail and hammer ? Assassins always go fully armed with knives and pistols ; imagine then whether they would have left them behind when they came purposely to commit a homicide ? It is true, that the nail was used to kill Sisera ; but Jael was not an assassin, nor did she await the enemy in her tent.—Why should we have dragged the corpse, while we were surrounded by strong men ? Had we any need of it ? Certainly not. Perhaps an



instinct of brutality induced us to it? Oh! things out of the natural order must not be supposed; and wife and daughter dragging the body of the husband and father as two wolves a rabbit, would have moved the assassins themselves to smile and shudder. If here you have a heart," and with one hand she touched her side, "if here wisdom," and with the other her forehead, "not only will you cease to afflict my disconsolate soul with such an accusation, but you will take care not to confuse my mind with the mixture of so many monstrosities."

Beatrice spoke this fluently, with a beautiful intonation of voice, and manner; and the bystanders, with their arms leaning on the benches, their bodies inclined, and their faces stretched forward, stood in admiration: even the notary Ribaldella, with his left hand firm on the papers and his right suspended on high, had remained without writing; even Judge Luciani wonderingly had exclaimed:

"How quick one learns in the devil's school!"

"I warn you," began the Chief Justice Moscati, "to maintain your promise of confessing the truth; and to observe the sacredness of the oath; since your accomplices have already revealed the crime, and ratified the confession by the trial of the torture."

"How! Then for the pains of the torture, they did not abstain from adding a sin to their souls, and make themselves infamous for ever! Ah! the torture does not prove the truth!"

"What! the torture does not prove the truth?" broke forth Luciani furiously, unable to contain himself any longer; half-rising from his seat, leaning his hands upon the arms of the chair to support his trembling body. If they had calumniated the reputation of his wife and daughter he would not have been so indignant. "The torture does not prove the truth; while all the legal authorities, not even one dissenting, proclaim it to be



the best of proofs? You will soon see whether the torture has the virtue to make one confess the truth."

Beatrice shook her head, as if an evil wind had covered it with dust, then continued :

"Lady Lucrezia, already advanced in age, educated in luxury, of a weak mind not foreseeing future evil, for the sake of avoiding the present may have been easily induced to confess falsely. With Bernardino, a boy, there was no need of torture to make him confess whatever was wished of him ; a little confectionery would have been enough. Giacomo, too, has for a long time been tired of life, and at other times has attempted to throw it away, as a load too heavy for him. Such have been those whom you have tried with the torture, and you presume to have discovered the truth?"

"Not these alone were your accomplices," added Moscati, "others also have confessed."

"Who then?"

"Marzio."

"Very well ; let Marzio come before me, and let us see whether he dares to sustain it to my face. Although I may suppose this man capable of the most horrible deeds, if I do not hear him myself I refuse to believe so much iniquity."

"Very well ; you will be assured of it by yourself."

"Alas !"

And this seemed a sigh, that would have broken the heart of him who uttered it. Beatrice had turned her eyes, and seen what she had not before perceived, the preparations of the infernal instruments, and she shuddered from head to foot. Under one of the scaffolds stood Marzio, or rather his shadow ; his skin stuck to his bones, and, excepting his glassy eyes, every other part of the body seemed dead within him ; one would have said that they had dragged him there to breathe his last ; he endeavored to throw himself at the feet of Beatrice, but was not able

to move a step, and he fell with his face to the earth. Beatrice stood a moment staring at him with a wild look ; her restless foot made the motion of trampling upon him ; but immediately her anger changed into pity, and she stretched her arm to help him rise. Then—with a hardly perceptible voice Marzio murmured :

“ My sweet lady, am I still worthy of your pity? O Lady Beatrice, have compassion upon me for the love of God ; for I am miserable—very miserable, indeed.”

“ Marzio, why did you accuse me ? What had I done to you that you should have conspired with the others to take away my reputation ?”

“ Ah ! I know only too late the divine hand which chastises me ; late—for innocence alone can give us happiness—I took another course, and behold I have caused with my own hand, the ruin of others—but for myself patience ; but for so many other innocent ones—ah !—I killed Olimpio fearing that the shameless wickedness of that man might have offended you, and the contrary has happened. But I swear by that Jesus who is soon to judge me, that I never had the intention of harming you. Tired of life, worn out by disease, gnawed by the remorse of crimes committed, benumbed by torments, I heard nothing of what they read to me, and made me affirm ; I confessed all that they wished, on condition that they would put me to death, and immediately ; they did not keep the promise, and have converted my words into poniards to thrust them into the hearts of innocent beings.”

“ Your Honor,” interrupted Judge Luciani, “ I hope you have not called us here to listen to the recitations of eclogues between Amaryllis and Melibœus.”

“ I approve of the very wise observation of His Honor Judge Luciani,” added the Judge Valentino Turchi.

“ Be patient, gentlemen,” Chief Justice Moscati mildly

admonished them, "and remember that we have not come here for amusement ; and since we have the terrible power of cutting short words with an axe, let us allow these unfortunate ones the free vent of tears."

"They will have time enough to weep when they shall have returned to their prisons : if your Honor had taken the care to turn the sand dial, you would have noticed that already two hours have passed without accomplishing anything. The State certainly does not pay us in order to have us waste our time in words—and if we are to continue in this manner, I must ask permission to go and attend to other business of greater importance."

"Sir, you can go, may God be with you."

But the judge did not avail himself of the leave of the chief justice; he rather seemed to sit with greater ease upon his chair. In the meanwhile Moscati turning to Marzio said :

"Prisoner, answer briefly : do you ratify, or not, your deposition in regard to this accused person ?"

"My Lords Judges ! the harm which you can do me may be great, but short. I find myself approaching the tribunal of God, before whom there is no need of confessions and witnesses. You may shorten the thread of this life ; but not lengthen it. Now ; learn the truth as He knows it, who shall judge me, and you also. I know well that these will be my last hours, and who knows how painful they will be !—no matter—blessed be they, because by them it is allowed me to be witness of the innocence of this divine maiden. Who Francisco Cenci was, many among you ought to know, for you must have been present to try, and judge him for his most shocking crimes.—The days of his calendar were crimes each more atrocious than another ; his sport was to trample upon all laws, both divine and human ; nature seemed to have placed her boundaries, before which the most awful criminals have drawn back, only to prove his impiety

in leaping over them. Such was Count Cenci : and who among you is ignorant of it ? One day this devil breathed near me, and withered my heart.—Your Honors must know, that I married a girl of Vittana—Annetta—worshipped by me, a poor orphan, after the Blessed Madonna ; and he robbed her from me, beautiful, fresh, and full of life,—and he restored her to me—yes, he restored her to me ; but a disfigured corpse, with a dagger in her breast which passed from one side to the other. I assaulted him in his castle, which, on account of the infamies committed within its walls, has the title of Ribalda ; and not finding him there, I destroyed his house, burned everything that fell under my hands : upon those stones are still left the traces of my flames. I left the country, swearing to revenge myself by the blood of his family and his own. I came to Rome, endeavored to enter into his service, and succeeded : I succeeded also in gaining his confidence ; by what means it is not necessary to say—to remember them it makes me shudder ; nor shall I even narrate to you what he confided to me—it will be enough to say, that they were things to frighten even the devil. There, while I was planning how to fulfill my revenge, I discovered the inexpressible affliction of his family. He hated his children as enemies : he besought God and the Angels to grant him, before dying, the favor of seeing them all killed. Go to the Church of St. Thomas, and you will find the sepulchres which he had caused to be prepared for his children, whom he desired to bury there ;—go, and you will see beside a son of his buried there—what ? a dog.—Only one creature he loved.—Did I say he loved ? I have said wrong, and still I cannot express myself differently : I fear to have said little, but I could say no more without covering my face for shame—but I cannot raise my hand to my face—for you have broken my arms with tortures.—He loved then Beatrice. Prisons, hunger, beatings, and worse, corruptions, flatteries and abominable images, all did this infa-

mous old man use to contaminate this angel of purity. Then compassion for the unhappy family which I had sworn to exterminate conquered me, and in one day alone I prevented more crimes, than you perhaps have judged in one year. When there arrived from Spain to Count Cenci the news of the death of his sons Rocco and Cristoforo, he had the courage to prepare a banquet for his relatives and friends, where for what he said and did it seemed a miracle that Rome did not fall upon him : inquire of the guests ; among these there were Cardinals of the Holy Mother Church, and illustrious Barons. When the guests, expelled by terror, left the hall deserted, he, more intoxicated with impiety than wine, dared to lift his wicked hands upon Beatrice. This would have been his last day, for I behind him raised a vase of silver to crush his head, if this innocent girl, screaming, and protecting him with her arms, had not saved him. Moved by her most ardent prayers not to attempt the life of her father, I did not wish to give up my revenge ; but resolved to leave the house, and surprise him elsewhere. However the malicious old man had begun to suspect me ; and, pretending friendship, sent me to Rocca Petrella to prepare his rooms. His rooms!—He had already commissioned some assassins to murder me, and in the meanwhile he cautiously gave me the red mantle embroidered with gold ; and although I refused to accept it, it seeming unbecoming to my state, he wished I should take it at any rate to preserve myself from the influence of the malaria travelling in the campagna of Rome : so he said ; but in truth because the red mantle should serve as a countersign for the assassins. I saved myself from his snares, and I planned them for him : I gathered a band of companions ; and when he was supposing me dead, I made him a prisoner in his last journey to Rocca Petrella, and carried him to the caves of Tagliacozzo. There he was to die ; it seemed now that neither the wisdom, nor the power of man could save him ; and still he was saved.



We drank a certain drugged wine, which the Count had brought with him from Rome ; and while we were deep asleep by means of this wine, he was taken away from the midst of us, although I had the key of his prison in my pocket. And who was his liberator ? Look ; this divine maiden. Notwithstanding I did not give up my fierce idea, I still thirsted for revenge ; and one night, having first well reconnoitered the place, taking with me two companions, I entered the castle through a window in the lower floor, breaking through the iron grating : there we separated to look around the house ; one of my companion saw a form cross the room ; he hid himself in the dark, and then followed it in the distance : the form ascended the stairs of the tower, opened a room, and entered : my companion hastened after it ; he touched the door, it yielded ; either because the man wished not, or forgot to shut it, considering himself safe. In this prison Count Cenci kept his daughter Beatrice shut up as a reward for his life saved :—Ought I to say what drove the wicked old man there ?—No—you are all fathers ;—it would make your flesh and bones creep with horror—my companion rushed upon him, killed him with a knife, less for the sake of my revenge, than to revenge nature ; and he did right : and any one of you that would affirm he would not have done the same, I declare him here, in the presence of Christ, more a traitor than he who struck him on the face. We dragged the accursed corpse out, we hurled him down from the *parterre* upon the alder-tree. Lady Beatrice was awakened by the noise of the fall which he made on the pavement. The sheet remained spotted with the Count's blood : but neither did she see it, nor did she give it to the washerwoman, because she fainted in her prison ; and removed from thence more dead than alive, she lay many days in bed afflicted with the fiercest convulsions. I killed Olimpio, and how and why I told you before. At Naples I confessed what they wished, on account of the tortures—this is the truth—everything else



is false. Now do what you will with me.—Meanwhile concluding, I thank God with all my heart, for having given me breath enough to finish—for I could not begin again.” And saying this he would have again fallen to the ground, if Master Allessandro had not quickly supported him.

“Tell me, your Honor, is there not some danger that she may have bewitched him?” whispered Luciani, with an air of mystery, in the ear of Moscati; and as the latter shrugged his shoulders without answering, Luciani continued to grumble: “Well, well—you do not believe such things; they seem to you nonsense—be careful and not allow yourself to be dazzled by the obscure light of the age, for I can tell you that it only clears one path alone, and it is that which leads to hell.”

The petulance of Luciani bitterly displeased Moscati; still, hearing his faith doubted, since in those times to believe in witches was an article of faith, as he was a very pious man he started, and resolutely asked Luciani:

“Sir, what reason have you to doubt of my believing in witchcraft? I do certainly believe in it; but it seems to me that this is not a case of it. Then you persist in retracting your confession, prisoner?”

Marzio nodded his head.

“Definite torture—there is no remedy,” observed Luciani readily; and Valentino Turchi repeated loudly:

“There is no remedy; definite torture.”

Moscati, taking out his handkerchief, wiped the perspiration from his brow; then turning to the Notary he said:

“Sir Notary, warn the accused not to insist on his retraction; warn him that otherwise the law requires that he should be exposed to definite torture—warn him what definite torture means—and in case he should persist, draw up the decree.”

The good man spoke these sentences sighing, and the Notary in clear language repeated them to Marzio; explaining, beside,

that definite torture meant to subject him to torments *usque ad necem*, which Latin words mean even unto death. Marzio assented even to this with his head, because his swollen tongue now prevented him from speaking. The decree being drawn up, read and subscribed, Notary Ribaldella, turning first towards Luciani, who winked pleasantly at him, said to the executioner :

“Do your duty.”

Master Alessandro took the arms of Marzio ; drew them behind his back ; placed one over the other, bound them with a cross tie ; shook the rope to be assured if it ran smoothly in the block, and then, taking his cap off, asked :

“Your Honors, with the shock, or without it ?”

“The Devil ! with the shock, of course, and a good one,” replied Luciani, who could not contain himself.

The others affirmed, nodding their heads.

Master Alessandro, assisted by one of his aids, pulled up Marzio very slowly. Beatrice bowed her face upon her breast in order not to see ; but forced by an internal motion she raised it : “Horrible ! horrible !” Screaming she covered her eyes with both her hands. Those naked bones, stretched to their utmost, struck her at the same time with fear and terror. The executioner, after having made Marzio touch with his arms the gallows stretched at an angle over his head nearly six feet high, took in his hand the end of the rope, and let it go. Marzio fell heavily to within four inches of the pavement ; tremendous was the shock, and his bones were heard to crack, and his muscles tear. Marzio stared as if his eyes were about to burst from their sockets ; opened his mouth frightfully, showing his teeth, and a hoarse groan issued from his throat ; soon after, a slight gurgling was heard, and from his open mouth appeared an air bubble, which bursting, let fall from the sides of his lips a bloody foam. In truth it had been one of the most famous shocks that master Alessandro had given in his life ; if he was pleased or sorry could

not have been divined ; he stood hardened and silent, gazing at his work.

“ Come, master Alessandro, well done—give him another shock,” insisted Judge Luciani, his hands leaning on the arm of his chair, and half standing.

“ It will not matter, your Honor ; for death has given him the last shock.”

“ What ? What ? Is he dead ?” indignantly cried Luciani. “ Why did you let him die ? Why did this fellow dare to die before annulling his retraction ?”

And as master Alessandro shrugging his shoulders said not a word, the judge continued :

“ Let us see—let us try if he is still alive ; give him a squeeze with the boot,—a little fire under the soles of his feet, to see if his spirit cannot return.”

And he rose as if to aid master Alessandro ; but Moscati, disdainfully, held him by the arm, exclaiming with force :

“ For God’s sake ! recollect the dignity of your office ! Are you a judge or an executioner ?”

But Luciani loosening his arm, and, overcome by his brutal instinct, hastened near to the executioner, who held his hand upon the heart of Marzio, and anxiously asked :

“ Well ?”

“ Your Honor, I have told you, he is dead.”

Then Luciani, full of rage, turned to the dead man as if to reproach him :

“ Ah, you have escaped, ruffian ! You died to cheat justice of the confession, and Master Alessandro of thirty ducats fee for hanging you.” And then returning to the bench, with angry voice and gestures cried to Moscati :

“ Come, your Honor, let us strike the iron while it is hot ; let us profit by the fear which terror must have infused into the mind of the accused ; let us hear in what note she will sing with the

sound of the rope," and he darted his eyes upon Beatrice like the tongue of a viper.

"Enough," ordered Moscati severely ; " I rule the trial ; the sitting is closed ;" and he moved to depart.

The notary Grifo, by force of habit, stopped awhile to clean the pens ; and placing them hastily in good order, ran after the judges, exclaiming :

" Now I will finish telling you how I obtained the snuff-box of my Lord Duke of Guise."

Beatrice, white as a winding sheet, staggered as if falling, her lips turned black, and her eyes trembled wildly ; shortly after she shook her head, and raised herself again like a tree bent by the passing gust of wind ; then courageously walked towards the corpse of Marzio, stood before it, and looking fixedly at it murmured :

" Unfortunate man ! You have not been able to save me ; but I forgive you, and will pray to God to forgive you also. You have sinned much ; but have loved and suffered much. You did not live for virtue, but have died for truth. I envy you—for my life is such, that it envies the dead." So saying she extended her hand to the eyes of the dead man, which were still staring, and shut them ; then with her handkerchief she wiped the bloody foam from his mouth, " I cannot show my love in any other manner than rendering to you the last offices ; and in rendering them to you with all my heart." Saying which she turned to the keepers, and with a firm voice added, " Now let us return to prison."

But the quick shivering of her flesh showed the tremendous emotion of her mind ; her limbs trembled, and at every step she staggered. Master Alessandro, taking his cap from his head and keeping himself at a distance with dutiful respect, said to her :

" Lady, I know that you cannot touch me ; and may it

please God that I may never touch you ; you have need of some one to support you ; if you allow me, I will call such a person, upon whom you can rest without fear ; she is born of an evil stock, and in prison ; yet, nevertheless, she is a flower which could be presented to the Madonna—she is my daughter.”

And he called with a prolonged whistle ; in a few moments a girl, beautiful indeed, appeared ; but white, white as wax. Poor girl ! she knew she was born to misfortune.

“Virginia,” said her father to her, “give your arm to this lady—she is unfortunate as you are.”

Beatrice, looking the girl in the face, felt well disposed towards her ; when she heard she was named like her mother, she smiled sadly upon her, and leaning on her arm, walked towards her prison.

Master Alessandro purposely gave that terrible shock with the rope to Marzio, in order to let him die under the blow ; and he succeeded as he had wished, considering the miserable state to which that unfortunate man was reduced ; not, however, through hatred ; on the contrary, through pity. In order that the man might die soon, and with less suffering, the executioner threw away his thirty ducats, which he would have received for hanging him ; which, for an executioner, was much ; truly, much more than the pious heart of a superintendent of modern humane prisons could permit ; who, for thirty ducats and a little red ribbon on his button-hole, would sell even his Saviour.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE JUDGES.

Di nuova pena mi convien far veral.

\* \* \* \* \*

Chè dove l'argomento della mente

S'aggiunge al mal volere ed alla possa,

Nessun riparo vi può far la gente.

DANTE: *Inferno.*

MISFORTUNE has an ill wind which runs before it, and is called a presentiment : peaceful minds foresee it through a thousand indications, as birds feel the approaching storm ; others, however, continually excited by the changes of daily events, do not notice it, and misfortune falls upon them suddenly and unprovided for.

In vain did Judge Moscati shut his ears to the internal voice which continually said : " You throw away your steps." The voice came back to discourage him, and through his mind thoughts passed like spectres, which partly hid and partly showed their awful aspect ; he dared not question them, and feared lest they should show themselves to him more openly ; still, heaving a deep sigh, and begging heaven for a look of pity, he went to the palace of the Vatican. After having requested to be announced, he awaited patiently full two hours, until the chamberlain of the Pope told him to enter, and, accompanied by him, he found himself in the presence of the Supreme Pontiff.

Either on account of the Pope's sight, or some other cause, the chandelier was surrounded by a circle of green silk, in such a



manner that the face of Clement VIII. could not be seen, nor could be seen either Cinzio Passero or Pietro Aldobrandino, Cardinals, nephews of the Pope, who stood behind the back of his chair. In those times, Popes resembled each other like the fingers of the same hand, pressed for many centuries upon the heads of no small portion of human kind—and whether to bless, the Omnipotent God will judge one day. At the present time there is some little difference among them ; not, however, so much as to make them appear as if born of different families ; and leaving others, to speak only of the two last, Pius IX. showed himself very affectionate to the liberty of the people, and a most loving son of his country and the reverend Mother Italy ; in religious things truly studious, but not rigidly zealous, at least in the beginning of his pontificate ; on the contrary, Gregory XVI. was only versed in the divinity, of which he was a great master ; taking less care of the liberty and the happiness of his beloved children. The latter, to bind the mild chains between loved sons and a loving father, called in only *one* foreigner ; the former, to bind it yet stronger, so that in course of time it might never be loosened, called in *four* of them, and still keeps two to aid him to make the Roman people bear that sweet yoke, which is his love ; and that I speak the truth, you may be assured by the *Civiltà Cattolica*—a learned, pious, and above all, wise daily paper of the Reverend Fathers Jesuits.

Clement was clothed with his cope of crimson velvet trimmed with ermine, and a garment of magnificent lace ; the hood also of crimson velvet ; the toga, stocking and shoes of white silk, and upon the latter the golden cross was embroidered. The light of the candles shining upon the lower part of the Pontiff, showed a foot of the servant of servants of God, which, resting proudly upon a cushion of crimson velvet trimmed with golden galloon and tassels, seemed commanding whoever approached : “ Kiss me ! ” Judge Moscati was too good a Catholic not to

hear this voice ; and although on account of his age he was not very firm in his body, vanity did not permit the Pope to remember that he also was weak and mortal like Moscati, and prevent him from the ignominious act. He fell down heavily, and with his hoary head knocked against the legs of the Pope, who, ill with habitual gout, felt the pain keenly ; but, biting his lips, suppressed a groan, until with a bitter voice he was able to say :

“ Rise.”

The old man, leaning his trembling hand upon the floor, not without first bending his knees several times, succeeded in rising to his feet. Having risen, and taken breath, with simple frankness he opened his mind in regard to the trials of the Cenci family ; he made manifest the uncertainty of the accusation, exposed the unlikelihood of the depositions, the youth of several of the accused, the facts not only discordant, but contrary to each other ; and although he added several things of his own, he repeated the observations of Beatrice ; and even dared to hint (a supreme boldness in those times) of the doubtful proofs which, according to his opinion, were derived from the tortures ; since Marzio had confessed under the torture, but he had also retracted his confession, and had died under it, in testimony that he had at last said the truth. The Cencis, then, excepting the girl, had confessed some things, and denied others, declaring they had accused themselves because obliged by the force of the pain. Wonderful, he added, was the simplicity of Beatrice, her language very powerful, her means of persuasion irresistible ; so that for himself he judged her entirely innocent. These things he wished, as a duty of conscience, to signify to His Holiness, so that, in his infallible judgment, he should advise what would be for the best. Bernardino, a boy twelve years old, he had tried with the torture, and he felt in his heart an unspeakable remorse and affliction. Beatrice he had not tortured, it seeming to him to be a mortal sin.

While Moscati was speaking, the two cardinals through that

half obscurity exchanged looks like lightning forerunners of the storm, and the Pope himself frowned several times ; but, by an old habit, very expert in dissimulating, he contained himself, and in a milder voice than usual, praised Moscati for his good judgment ; he promised to give full consideration to the thing reported to him, and, requesting him with kind words to return the next day at the same hour, dismissed him, giving him the apostolic benediction. And Moscati, acquainted with the habits of the court, notwithstanding the singular demonstrations of benevolence, went away with a more despairing heart than when he had come : an internal voice, more pertinacious than ever, admonished him that he had thrown away his work and steps : educated in the school of experience, he knew well that men in general, but particularly priests, the more they promise the less they fulfill, and hopes born in courts either wither on their stems, or, like the poppy flowers, are blown away by the first wind ;—courts are insidious shores, one is never so near a shipwreck, as when the sky is serene, the sea tranquil.

Notwithstanding his presentiment, the good man went at the appointed hour next day, supplicating God that at least his good intentions might be accepted. Being received by the chamberlains with unusual obsequiousness, they signified to him that his eminence the cardinal of St. George, nephew of his holiness, awaited him. The sad foreboding grew still more, but what can man do against fate ? Certainly when all our labors to procure some good are in vain, it is but little comfort to think that we did all that was in our power ; and still, no other consolation but this remains to us. The Cardinal Cinzio, educated early in state affairs (for yet young he accompanied as secretary his uncle Ippolito, then cardinal of St. Pancrazio, to the legation of Poland) was famous in the knowledge of courtly arts, so that it is not necessary to say that he received Moscati with exquisite urbanity : he made him sit beside him, not without begging him

at first to sit in his own chair. After they had both seated themselves, the cardinal with pleasing words said :

“I am happy, my lord Chief Justice, to be able to assure you, that your wise considerations about the trial of the Cencis have been very acceptable to his holiness ; and they were a proof not only of your very good heart, but also of your excellent judgment, and hence if he before had a great faith in you, now he has increased a thousandfold in his affection and esteem. However, it was the intention of his holiness to consider this affair diligently, and with that gravity which he thinks it deserves. The blessed father wishes to avoid the asperities, although salutary, of the glorious memory of Sixtus V. but he disapproves at the same time of the too great benignity of Gregory: he has seen with inexpressible bitterness that the evil plants, on account of the little care used during the war with Ferrara, have budded forth oftener and more malignant than ever in the bosom of his States : this his religion, and the duty which he owes towards God, forbids him to allow. Still it cannot be doubted, without offence to the lofty piety of the most blessed father, that the experiments which in his supreme wisdom he has been pleased to adopt, may not be akin to justice.” And here suddenly changing his subject, with a more benign voice he continued : “The paternal heart of the Supreme Pontiff was deeply moved in considering the notable failing of the health of such a zealous servant, and so well deserving as your Honor ; he has known with profound regret that misfortune has visited your house, and he desires, as much as can be granted to mortal hands, to alleviate you Honor’s grief. He desires me to signify this to you : the holy father is greatly edified by your zeal, my lord ; but charity and justice do not consent to accept this more than human sacrifice.”

“Ah ! there are afflictions here within,” replied Moscati, to whom the mildly cruel words of the cardinal had the same effect

as a hand which undertakes to unbind a wound in order to see, not to cure it, "which men cannot console, but embitter. Only God can, and perhaps with that only remedy to all evils—death !"

"And I believe it ; hence I wonder so much the more how you, oppressed by so much domestic grief, have strength enough to fulfill the duties of your office, which, laborious and by their own nature melancholy, instead of alleviating, must keep sad thoughts in your mind."

"It is true ; but I persevere because I have always believed, and do still believe, that there is no difference between a soldier and a magistrate ; and the latter for his great reputation ought to die upon the bench, as the former on the field of battle. The Roman Emperors themselves, considering the labor and the perseverance of the soldier, did not hesitate in choosing them for magistrates."

"This, which should be esteemed and commended as estimable goodness in the subject, would be a reproach and harshness in the Prince, who should not suffer a faithful magistrate to wear himself out in his work until it becomes a rotten plant, fit only to burn : even the Romans, who were so active, as you so learned are not ignorant of, when they arrived to that part of life, distinguished by them with the name of *senior*, were allowed without shame to abandon public service : towards evening, every animal that lives upon the earth ceases his work."

"And even I, your Eminence, desire to follow the usual tenor of the life of all creatures ; not indeed to rest myself, for as to rest we shall have time enough for that in the grave ; but rather to prepare myself with the meditation of divine things to that end, common to all of us, and desired by me more than any other mortal ; but notwithstanding the Roman examples, I fear to be blamed for it. The virtue of the sacrifice of our Redeemer certainly taught us differently ; I, who upon this point, feel my-



self not guilty, would wish to carry my white hair to the grave without reproach."

"I advise you, in the first place, my dear brother in Christ, to give a listening ear to the call from above ; besides, I assure you, that instead of blame, you cannot but receive praise from good men, and ample approbation from the most Blessed Father, in the name of whom I proffer to you all those favors, which you may desire as most fit to accomplish your very worthy intention."

"Since your Eminence is pleased to console my afflicted heart with so much benignity, I declare that I feel a desire to give myself up to God in some convent of monks famous not only for sanctity, but for useful works to their brothers in tribulation."

"And of these Convents, my dear sir, the Catholic Church is so abundant, that there is no other trouble but that of choosing. There are the monks of St. John of God, devoted to the care of the poor sick ; there are the Augustinians of the Redemption ; the Order of Preachers, true allies of Christ ; the Franciscans, whom, with the Dominicans, Pope Onorius (through divine revelation) declared the supporters of the Church in danger ; but all these religious orders, as they belong to the Church militant, although suitable to your Honor's zeal, are not adapted to your studies and age. The reverend Fathers of Benedictins of Montecassino, dedicated to a contemplative life, are, through their Christian virtues and learning, famous among the most distinguished orders of Christianity ; and I would advise you to retire among them, if, according to my conviction, you do not give the preference to the Father of the Company of Jesus."

"The Jesuits ?"

"Exactly. Who more than they deserve well of the Church ? Francis and Dominick sustained the Church in danger, the Jesuits drew it out of the danger. Who would have been so



strong as they to fight the battles of faith against the Lutherans, Calvinists, Zwinglians, and other cursed plagues of heretics, whom Christ confound? To Papacy and Royalty the Jesuits are more necessary than the teeth in a man's mouth; without them one cannot chew—and I know well what I am saying. Royalty once tried to oppress the Church; and the Church, legitimately defending itself, crushed Royalty; these mutual strifes were very dangerous, and those of Royalty wicked in addition. Now, however, that the people have not failed to profit by these daily quarrels, and, breaking the bridle, menace both the throne and the altar, Princes have acquired wisdom; and, joined in a beautiful tie of love, are laboring to heal mutual wounds; they take now equal care of each other, because both derive from God, the Church directly, Royalty indirectly. The Jesuits have wonderfully understood the double mission, and exercise it with the wisdom of the snake, and the simplicity of a dove; there are no doubts among them, no hesitations, nor dishonest spirits of discussion. Obedience and faith will triumph over the world, because, your Honor will understand, that he, who thinks it proper to scrutinize the dogmas of the Church and the decrees of kings, if he has not already become a heretic and rebel, is in already a fair way of becoming one."

"Eh! yes—the Jesuits—I dare say; in truth, they deserve great credit; but of the Girolamini, your Eminence, what do you think?"

"Holy Virgin! Would your Honor then select an imperial retirement? This does not look like humility; however, even the Girolamini deserve well of the Church. Of course, as they are all monks, you can choose blindly; the former seem good to you, and the latter better; it is all harvest from the seed of God. If you feel a vocation for the Order of St. Girolamus, give ear to the call of God."

"May the Lord reward you for having instructed me. Short-

ly, if your Eminence will grant me, I will place in your hands a petition in order that his Holiness may dismiss me from the office ; and in presenting it, I beg your Eminence to explain to him the reasons which move me to this step, so that there may still be continued upon me the approval of the Father of the Faithful."

"Do not wait for to-morrow what you can do now, says a very old proverb. You have before you, my dear sir, all that is necessary for writing ; there is no need of delay—be assured of my good depositions, and doubt not of the good intentions of the Holy Father towards you."

The judge, persuaded by this extreme haste, wrote the petition, and consigned it into the hands of the Cardinal St. George, who received it with a very cunning smile, which hardly moved the hair of his moustache ; perhaps it was one of satisfaction, perhaps one of scorn, and it may have been both. The judge returning home, thinking upon what had happened, and reviewing with a quiet mind the words and deeds, perceived how the sharp priest, taking advantage of the agitation of his mind, had induced him, if not to mistake, at least to change his course, and extracted from him what he wanted. However, the one who derived the most profit this time was the conquered one, since Judge Moscati withdrew without cowardice from a step, from which he could not have drawn back without danger, nor overstepped without infamy. He retired, as he said, into the cloister ; he never took sacred orders, however, and enjoyed for several years that quiet peace which awaits men (but not all, only the more fortunate) after the contentions and struggles of this battle, called life.

The Cardinal of St. George presented that same evening the petition to the Pope, who, placing it upon the table, pressed it down with his closed hand ; and then, assenting by a drawing of his lips towards his ears, which with him meant a smile, said briefly to the nephew of his choice :

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“ Now, Cinzio, keep an eye on the other one.”

If on the plains of Africa or Asia, or even in the fields of Sardinia, it happens that a horse or sheep die, hardly does there come from the corpse, laying under the burning heat of the sun, the first faint effluvia of corruption, when, if you raise your head, and from the culminating point of the hemisphere glance even to the extreme horizon, it seems all pure and limpid ; looking again, you will see, where the heaven seems to touch the earth or the waters, a cloud of black bodies appear, which at once spreading around you, show to your astonished eye a crowd of vultures, who, by their acuteness in smelling, are attracted to the foul banquet. Likewise cunning men, without fear of being deceived, smell from afar the cunning ones ; they soon recognize each other, grasp their hands, and help each other.

So Cardinal Cinzio Passero, wishing to bring out from the mean herd of magistracy, a malignant beast, raised his nostrils, and smelt from afar Judge Luciani. He sent for him, and with his accustomed courtesy, stated to him that the Holy Father, his most glorious uncle, was never wearied of speaking with great respect of him, for his great learning, and particularly for his ready and salutary severity with which he accomplished business ; he knew that Pope Sixtus, of holy memory, held him in high estimation, and had recommended him, before dying, as a praiseworthy subject in all respects, and able to be trusted implicitly in great emergencies ; that it had been the intention of the Pontiff, his uncle, to give him promotion, and recompense him for his many merits, but until then the cares of State, and the war had prevented him, and he felt very sorry for it. Meanwhile as a sign of his confidence in him, His Holiness wished to trust to him the Cenci's trial, scandalously protracted, while, as it was the general opinion, the proofs of the guilt of the accused were very many and powerful. He must proceed, then, without delay, for he would do a deed acceptable to the Roman people, and the Holy Pontiff ; and thus merit the name of restorer of justice.

"Even owls sometimes are caught," says the proverb ; and the Cardinal, extremely desirous of accomplishing his design, had used more fuel than was necessary. The eyes of Luciani sparkled like those of the wild beast before leaping upon his prey ; and his words issuing forth impetuously impeded his speech.

"Certainly," stammered he, "certainly, your Eminence, with Lord Moscati there was no way of drawing out a spider from its hole ; he had so many scruples in his head—such nonsensical notions—so many fears, that even I myself knew not what he was about. Just think, your Eminence, I found him even unwilling to apply to Beatrice Cenci the preparatory torture *monentibus indiciis*, while (God forbid that I should make a rash judgment) it seems to me that there is proof enough to have her hung (I beg pardon for the *lapsus linguæ*, she being a noble lady) —to have her beheaded, ten times.

"To think of it !" exclaimed the Cardinal, in astonishment, and raising both hands.

"And when I thought she may have been a witch, considering her shrewd talents, and her eloquence of speech, not at all natural in a simple girl, he shrugged his shoulders as if I had said a heresy. Your Eminence knows too well, that the devil when he enters the body of anybody gives him the gift of language."

His Eminence, on the contrary, knew by the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that the gift of language came from the Holy Ghost ; and that when after Easter, the Apostles went through the streets speaking in several languages, the people did not believe them possessed of the devil, but intoxicated with sweet wine : still, it not being for his interest to contradict the judge, he approved by closing his lips, and nodding his head.

"Repose upon me," continued Luciani, "as upon two pil-

lows ; I am accustomed to act quickly and well. When Pope Sixtus sent me to Bologna on the business of Count Peppoli, I had the honor of dispatching the affair in less than a week."

" Ah ! the poor Count, he was executed in '86."

" I beg pardon, your Eminence, it was in 1585, the Friday after the Corpus Christi, in the first year of his pontificate. The blessed Count had been pretty wild in his days ; so that he fell into the trap at last. After his arrest, as he was very rich, and powerful, and having a great number of relatives and adherents, there being no one who dared to testify against him, there was danger that he might get free for want of proof. His Holiness Pope Sixtus hearing this, sent me immediately to Bologna to briefly tell their Honors the judges, that if they did not immediately condemn to the gallows Count Peppoli, his Holiness would hang them. Being thus forced either to hang or be hung, they hung him, and they did well ; not however without some detriment to the reputation of the magistracy, on account of the past delay ; for, what is the law in well regulated governments ? Nothing but a rule of conduct for the subject. Now, who makes the law ? The King ; hence his will is law ; to write it or to publish it, belongs to the form, not to the substance ; and Pope Sixtus, who knew how to govern, wished the law to be his will not only written, but even expressed with his voice or sign."

" Eh ! Pope Sixtus knew what he was about."

" The petitions sent to the good Pontiff in favor of the Count amounted to five hundred, and more ; but he granted only one of them, and it was that of the Count himself, who alleging his privileges as a nobleman, reverently begged to be beheaded rather than hung. Sixtus, with his usual goodness, beside the favor requested, added one of his own, that for greater honor he might go to the scaffold with the sword by his side ; as in fact it was done."

" Well, your Honor may go now, and attend to this business, which I in the name of his Holiness recommend to you."



The new Chief Justice Luciani, bowing to the earth, renewed his alliance with dust, and took leave. In going home he had not a limb but quivered ; the coward trembled in his anticipated joy of being able to torment human beings, creatures of God, at will. If I affirmed that in his fierce and vile nature no desire of advantage to himself with promotions and money entered, it would not be true ; but such passion was a secondary one to the other of tormenting. Look at his face, and then tell me if this is a man ; his head is square, his forehead low, his ears turned back, his face larger in the lower jaws than the upper, his cheeks bloated, the lipless mouth lost among wrinkles, and leaving no way of discerning where it stops ; his hair stiff and short, his complexion mottled, except where the hair was, which could compare with verdigris, and conquer it ; his eyes small, round, yellow as saffron : a mistaken creation, a monstrosity of nature ; for, with a slight variation in his throat, his voice would not have escaped in words, but like a bark ; and instead of becoming a mean instrument of that which men are accustomed to call justice, he would have made a fine butcher's dog.

Returning to his home, Luciani was more lively than usual, he spoke merrily to his wife, whom heaven had given to him, of a far different heart ; he caressed his daughters, and sat down to supper, enlivening the occasion, as vulgar people are wont to do, by drinking largely. Having become more talkative, or rather more bold by wine, he exclaimed :

“ Come now, my daughters ; come here, for I want to give you some good news, which is, that before a week ends I mean to present you with a magnificent gift.”

“ Indeed ! And what will you give us, father ?” replied the eldest one.”

“ Guess.”

“ A silk dress.”

“ Better than that.”



"A trip to Tivoli?"

"Better, better. I will give you four heads cut from Roman ladies and cavaliers; and among them one attached to a neck as white and round as yours."

And so saying, with his two fingers he girded her neck. The girl started with a shudder from the pressure, exclaiming:

"These are presents for executioners, I do not wish them."

And the other sisters in chorus:

"Bad gifts, bad gifts, we don't want them."

"Woman," cried Luciani, looking with angry eyes at his wife, "our race partakes of the mother;" so saying he arose, drew his cap down over his eyes, and taking a light walked grumblingly to his room, where he shut himself in.

Next morning, when hardly daylight, Luciani might have been seen entering the prison of Corte Savella accompanied by two old women, or rather furies, and going straight to the prison of Beatrice.

The sad girl lay absorbed in many thoughts, all of which ended in afflicting conclusions; she therefore, wearied and tired of life, continually prayed God to call her in pity from this martyrdom to his holy peace. Suddenly the door of the prison opened noisily, and the cruel faces of Luciani and his companions appeared before the sorrowful girl.

He with short and bitter voice apprised her, that they had come to see whether she had any witches' marks about her; therefore she must with good grace submit herself to the examination. He then went to a corner of the room, and from thence, with his face turned towards the wall, ordered the two Megæreæ to perform their office.

Beatrice, burning with anger and shame, wrapt herself in her blankets, and, binding them tightly to her body, refused to undergo the humiliating search. The two bigoted executioners did not stop for this, but, using their scraggy and bony hands, tore

the blankets and sheets away by force. The beautiful angel of love fell naked into the power of those women.

*Piscis a capite fatit* " said Luciani from his corner ; " so begin to examine her head : divide first her hair, look carefully at the skin.—Dorothea, clean your spectacles—I repeat to you for the twentieth time—you will find there a small livid or black spot little larger than a lentil—have you found it ?"

" I find nothing," replied Dorothea, " except a mass of hair sufficient to make a wig for both of us, and some left."

" There would be enough for all three," observed the other.

" Look down now, look on the neck, the chest, the shoulders."

" Nothing."

" How, nothing ? It is imposible ?"

" It is so. It would be easier for a buffalo to pass unobserved over the snow, than a single hair over her white skin."

In this manner Beatrice was searched minutely, without their being able to discover the indicated sign.

" Truly," Luciani began to grumble from his corner, " the masters of the art tell us that the devil generally impresses his mark on the bosom, or over the left leg ; nevertheless as he is not bound to any law, search, search with great care upon her back."

" Here is—we find."

" What do you find, eh ?" asked Luciani, hardly able to contain himself in the corner.

" We find on her side a mole surrounded by some fine hair of a golden color."

" Well ! very well !—although the masters of the art say that the mark must appear livid or black, nevertheless it is well known that the Evil One, being a despiser of all laws, cannot subject himself to any fixed law : especially as now having to do with me he must have understood it was a fight between Greek and

Greek. Dorothea take a pin, and put it first into the holy water."

The bigot pulling out a long steel pin, put it, murmuring I know not what prayers, within a case of holy water. Luciani impatiently asked :

" Well, have you done ?"

" Yes, sir."

" Now then, courage ! stick it softly in the infernal mark."

Beatrice wept with rage seeing herself reduced to such ignominy, and fiercely defending herself, struck first one, now the other of those bigots away from her ; but they fell upon her more strongly than before. Feeling her flesh pierced with a pin, she broke forth into a fury, asking with agitated voice what foolishness it was ; and added that she was a Christian like them, and a better one too ; that they should be ashamed of tormenting a poor girl, who might have been their daughter, with such contemptible superstitions.

" Most Holy Virgin," bleated out Dorothea with a kid's voice, still using her bold hands, " we wish no sort of evil to you, my dear sister in Mary ; no truly, we do it for your good ; truly for the safety of your soul."

In the meanwhile Chief Justice Luciani, without turning his head, had whispered in his corner one of the many *Oremuses*, which begin *In nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*, and end with *per omnia secula seculorum, amen* ; with which he intimated or ordered the spirit of darkness to go out immediately from the body of Beatrice Cenci, leaving it free, clear and empty : and after he had finished it, said :

" God be praised ; now I feel satisfied, and I may say, almost safe, were either the devil there or not : if he were, by the power of the exorcism by this time he is returning with all haste to hell ; and if he were not, in that case he cannot be able to enter there after this."

And recalling the women, without even turning a look upon Beatrice, he went out with them from the prison talking serious and learned reasonings about the power of the devil, to whom, according to his idea, the mercy of God had left too much power ; and that if he had had the honor of advising the Eternal Father, he would have persuaded Him to hang the devil without mercy on the horns of the moon, and leave him there hanging, that he might serve as an example to all future malefactors, both in heaven and on earth ; then giving a ducat to each one he begged them to pray for him to St. Gaetano, and beg him the favor of accomplishing successfully the important business which he had on hand, to the annihilation of all wicked people, and the greater exaltation of the Holy Mother Catholic Church. The two bigots conformed to his desires by going directly to the church of Jesus, and praying fervently to St. Gaetano that he would deign to grant to the most holy brother in Christ, Chief Justice Luciani, the favor of being able to send legally to the scaffold all the Cenci family, not one excluded or excepted.

And while the good Luciani stood in expectation of divine favors, he did not leave untried earthly ones ; for he appointed, that the other judges, next morning, should meet him very early in the prison of Corte Savella ; which they in fact did, and without losing time, he ordered the girl to be brought before him.

In the place remaining vacant by the promotion of Judge Luciani, they had appointed a certain person, more stupid than a post ; neither a good nor a bad man ; bad enough and miserable however as a judge, for, excepting that of drawing his salary when due, he had never given himself the trouble to think of anything else ; always bending his will, like the sun-flower to the sun's rays, to the part indicated him by his superiors. A shameful mixture of cowardice, ignorance and covetousness, very

common among all kinds of hirelings, especially among those who are called ministers of justice, doubtless in allusion to the custom of pagan ministers, to murder and devour their victims.

Beatrice came before Chief Justice Luciani. Atrocious and barbarous was the spectacle, which once caused a kindred pleasure in contemplating wild beasts fighting against wild beasts, men against men, or men against beasts, in the amphitheatres ; yet it often happened that the means of defence were equal ; or if unequal, despair more than once subdued the fierce power, and the condemned man would thrust his naked arm in the throat of the lion, and choke him. But what more cruel and disgusting spectacle than exposing a creature bound with chains to the fury like that of wild beasts, but a great deal more ingenious, of a judge who advances against him armed with terrors, surrounded by insuperable forces, accompanied by torments which even the devil himself would not have known how to invent, from the rope, the iron, and fire.

"Prisoner," began Luciani, with a plebeian manner, which he meant to render solemn, "you heard once before the charges which were imputed against you ; do you desire them to be again read to you ?"

"There is no need of it ; they are things which once read are never forgotten."

"Especially when one has committed them. Now, I warn you, that by the confession of your accomplices you are fully proved guilty of your crime ; so that justice, lawfully, could do very well without your confession."

"And then, why do you so pertinaciously ask it of me ?"

"I ask it for the safety of your soul ; because, as a Christian and a Catholic, although an unworthy one, you ought to know, that dying without confession you will be infallibly lost."

"How, sir ! the care which you should take for the safety of your own soul, can give you also time to think of mine ? Leave



every one to provide for the safety of his own as best he can. These are things which pass between the Lord and his creatures, and you have nothing to do with them. You, if you are convinced of my guilt, can condemn me, and that is enough."

"Prisoner ! be on your guard, and remember that your bold manners before your judges can have no other effect than that of injuring your condition, already dangerous enough ; and as for myself, they can have no effect, for, besides having exorcised you according to the prescribed rules, I always carry about me a most potent remedy against witchcraft and enchantments, had there remained any power in you to use them against me. Now, for the second time I ask you, will you confess, or not ?"

"That which holy truth made it my duty to confess, I have already confessed ; the falsehood, which you seek, with the help of God, in whose arms I trust myself, neither your torments nor your flatteries can draw from me."

"This is what we shall see. In the mean while I wish you to know, that better heads than yours I have been able to make right. Notary Ribaldella, write : 'The most Holy name of God invoked, Amen. We decree, etc., before passing to ulterior trials, the torture of the *watch*, in the usual way, according to law, for forty hours, to which the prisoner, Beatrice Cenci, is to be submitted in place of the torture *ad quæstionem*, etc. ; charging to assist in the above said experiment, the notary Jacomo Ribaldella, for the first four hours ; the notary Bertino Grifi for the second four hours ; the notary Sandrello Bambagino for the third four hours ; and in this way to begin again, succeeding each other, until the time decreed shall have expired, or the confession of the accused occurs.' Sign it."

Thus Chief Justice Luciani commanded, after having signed the paper, which the notary gave him, himself, passing it to the other judges ; and these, like sheep (the comparison is a very mild one), signed it ; as if Luciani thought, felt, and deliberated



for all three. A usual benefit derived from associate judges, whose trinity can justly be defined—two persons asleep, and the third drawing up the papers !

The watch was a wooden stool about a cubit and half high, with the seat sharpened diamond shape, about a foot square ; the back likewise.

My history will not stop to narrate how they forced the unfortunate girl to sit upon it ; how they bound her legs, to prevent her from extending and touching the floor with them, to gain some alleviation from the torture ; how with a rope, lowered from the ceiling by means of a block, they bound her arms behind her back. My history will turn a frightened glance from the officers, who watched by the side of the unfortunate girl, and from time to time pushed her on each side, in order that with the sharpest pains she should rock upon the point of the seat, or strike against its sharp back. My history will not relate how the executioner, Master Alessandro, at least twice every hour, had orders to raise her, pulling her up with the rope, and letting her fall heavily upon the painful seat ; and he fulfilled it, as it had been commanded ; what could he do ? Many were the eyes that stared around him ; and then, there was no other way allowed him of showing his pity, than by sending the patient straightway to heaven, and removing the cruelty of the torments ; besides this, no more could he, or perhaps would ; pitiful he was, but an executioner. My history will be silent upon the shameful jests, the mockeries, and the obscene allusions heaped upon the chaste maiden by all those wild beasts with human faces, and above all by notary Ribaldella, who reflected, like a mirror, the soul of Luciani. It will be silent upon the frequent appearance, even in the latest hours of the night, of Chief Justice Luciani, maddened by the divine perseverance of Beatrice, and the perpetual grinding of his teeth, saying : “ Bind her tighter—shake her oftener.” It will be silent upon the burning

tears, the cold perspiration, the ineffable pains, the frequent faintings of the girl, and the cruel pity of the executioner in restoring her by salts and spirits to the perception of her pains. No ; those things, which the Vicars of Christ allowed, and not only allowed, but granted and promoted, the pen abhors to write, and the ink in tracing them would become red through shame. My history will rather speak of the superhuman courage and constancy of the glorious girl, who, in spite of the greatness of her martyrdom, remained firm in her purpose to die amid the tortures, rather than to contaminate her fame by the confession of a crime which she had not committed. Removed almost dying from the torture, they took her back into her prison, and replaced her in her bed.

There she was left two days. Her senses, brightening, would shine upon the past anguish ; but the other, alas ! more bitter, which remained yet to be passed, would darken all surrounding her with wavering uncertainty, like the light of a ship in a stormy night appearing and disappearing, alternately, upon the top or in the abyss of the waves, a fatal sign of approaching shipwreck to him who breathlessly contemplates it from the shore ; only the sense of pain lasted, which with its pangs strengthened that firm soul not to yield, but to die in silence.

The third day the officers came for her, whom Luciani called to new torments. By this time fully resigned to her destiny, she did not refuse to go ; only begged them, with a soft voice, to be kind enough to wait until she could dress ; and as the ruffians understood that undressed as she was they could not have presented her before the tribunal, they replied they would wait ; however, she must hasten, since the judges were already on the bench, and it was not becoming in the prisoner to let them wait. While Beatrice, helped by the daughter of the executioner, dressed herself, she said :

“ Listen, my dear Virginia. Since they call me, you know

they do it in order to torture me ; now, I strongly doubt but that I may die under the torture, as I saw it happen to poor Marzio ; therefore, I intend not to recompense you for your charity, my dear Virginia, but to leave you a recollection of me. You will take all my linen and dresses, that I have with me in prison—and here—take also this cross, which belonged to Lady Virginia, my mother ; on condition—that if I return alive from the torture, and can otherwise leave you a reminiscence of myself, you will restore it to me ; since I desire it should be buried with me. Of these violets, alas ! watered by my tears, and grown in the rays of the sun which penetrate but lightly and sadly through the grating of the window, you, as long as they last, make every day a bouquet, and offer it to the image of the Holy Virgin which I keep at the head of my bed—also—listen, Virginia,” and here she blushed, and spoke in a lower tone, “you must know that I have—oh ! no—I had a great lover, handsome and good ; and I loved him—and he loved me, and I still believe that he loves me exceedingly—but we can never be joined on the earth—and I much doubt whether even in heaven we can—alas ! it is not my fault ! You will take this image, and endeavor to present yourself to Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, and tell him that I sent it to him in order that he might give it to his friend, and let him know, at the same time, that I often prayed before it for the safety of his soul ; remember, bear it well in mind, so that you may not forget it. And add, also ”——

“ Oh ! do you suppose you are going to a ball ? We have waited nearly an hour—come as you are.”

Beatrice went ; nor could Virginia answer her a word, for the haste of the officers prevented her, and grief choked her ; she accompanied her, weeping, to the door, and here, after having kissed her, she stayed. Beatrice turned her head upon the threshold, and saw that the good girl had gone to kneel before the image of the Madonna, hanging under it the little

cross of diamonds which had belonged to her mother, Virginia Cenci.

Chief Justice Luciani, with both his arms stretched out upon the table, like a dog when he rests, was reasoning thus to his honorable colleagues :

"It seems impossible ! If I had not caused her to be searched diligently, I may say almost under my own eyes, since *honestatis causa*, I held my face turned to the wall, I could not persuade myself that she was not bewitched."

"However," observed Valentino Turchi, gravely, with ostensible humility, which left transparent his presumption, like a door half shut, into which the sun's rays shine obliquely, "however, permit me to observe, that her hair was not shaved."

Luciani, turning suddenly his head towards Judge Turchi, as a dog bitten by a fly, with bitter voice answered :

"I did not have her shaved, because Del Rio, Bodino, and other most famous writers on necromancy, do not mention hair as a part upon which the devil generally exercises his power."

"Generally ; and it is right," added Turchi ; "but I have many times considered, on one hand God placed the great power of Samson in his hair, and on the other, that the devil always likes to imitate, and turn to evil what the Lord does for good ; so against the opinion, besides only a negative one, of the alleged authors, I have always been of the opinion, that the hair can very well be chosen by the devil as a place for his abominable witchery ; and finally, *utile per inutile non vitiatur* ; and in such grave business, the shaving of the head, with your permission, is never useless."

"Your doubt," replied Luciani, leaning his head as if convinced, and with a voice, which ill-concealed his internal rage, "is not certainly without foundation, and"—

But here the notary Ribaldella, who was as an echo of the soul of his patron Luciani, aiding him in this difficulty, wrote

a word upon a piece of paper, and with an humble bow passed it to him while he was about to end his speech. Luciani read it and his eyes flashed with ferocity and pride ; he raised his head, but first turned it to his faithful servant with a look, that seemed wishing to bite him, but only meant for a smile ; then to Judge Turchi, and continued : “ and would deserve praise if it did not prevent us from trying the torture *capillorum*, which I intended to apply this morning : and you are too well versed in the practice of criminal trials, not to know that this trial always produces the best effects.”

Notary Ribaldella upon the scrap of paper had written :

“ And the torture *capillorum* ?”

Judge Turchi in his turn bent his head confused ; Luciani continued :

“ For my part I am rather of the opinion that we should this morning begin by the torture *capillorum*, and according to what comes from it, we will rule ourselves. Oh ! yes, as the proverb says : ‘ as the master treats us, so we will serve him. ’ ”

At the appearance of Beatrice, pale, with a suffering air, her eyes burning within a blue circle, Luciani, still in the position of a tired dog, endeavoring as much as it was possible for him to appear mild in his rough aspect and harsh voice, said :

“ Gentle maid ! how much my heart has grieved in being obliged to subject you to torture, God may tell you for me, for I could not express it in suitable words. I am a father of girls by age, if not by beauty, equal to you ; and in seeing you tortured, not without fear I have asked myself : Luciani, what mind, what heart would yours be, if your own blood should be tormented thus ? The duty of a magistrate, a feeling of humanity, the piety of a Christian persuades me to advise you to take compassion on yourself. Alas ! have pity on your own youth. What use is your obstinate pride ? I have told you, and repeat it now ; the proofs in the process are enough to convict you as guilty ;



the confession of your own accomplices condemns you. Try to deserve with a sincere confession the mercy of the most Blessed Father. Of the keys, which he has in his august charge, he likes much more to use the one that opens, than the other that shuts. Above all he loves the reputation of benevolence ; and as he is in name, so in deeds he desires to show himself truly clement. Do not force me, Lady Beatrice, to use rigor ; consider that the torments suffered by you are as pleasures compared with the atrocious tortures " (and here he gave free vent to his harsh voice) " which justice reserves for the stubborn."

" Why do you tempt me ?" replied Beatrice calmly. " Is not the power which you have to lacerate my body enough, why do you strive to humble my soul ? These are the qualities of the devil, not those of a judge, or at least they ought not to be. My body is yours ; a wild force places it into your power—torment it as you will ; the soul my Creator gave me, and this, instead of being frightened by your menaces, or deceived by your flatteries, comforts me to sustain more than you will be able to inflict."

The eye-brows of Luciani compressed like pincers ; and striking with his open hands upon the table, he cried furiously :

" *Ad torturum—ad torturam capillorum.* Where is master Alessandro ? He must always be present before the tribunal when I preside."

" He has gone to Bassano on professional business, by superior orders ; and left word that he would return during the day."

" When I most need, then everybody leaves me alone. To you then, Carlino, I know you to be a well-deserving youth ; do yourself honor now."

These words Luciani addressed to the executioner's aid, who answered ingenuously, rubbing his hands :

" Eh ! we will try."

The truth was that master Alessandro, taking the occasion



which chance presented him, had gone from Rome. Two ruffians now fell upon Beatrice, unbound her beautiful blond hair, twisted, and tied it around a bunch of ropes as quickly, as beyond all imagination, horrible ; and then they raised her from the ground.

Beauty deformed pains the heart to look upon, more than ugliness itself. If chance ever led you to travel in Greece, you may have passed, without even noticing them, by the ruins of some Venetian or Turkish fortress ; your spirit must have been saddened however in contemplating the Parthenon mutilated by time, the Turks, and Lord Elgin, leaving the passenger uncertain whether the Temple of Minerva has been more injured by the destructive power of the first, the barbarity of the second, or the scientific robbery of the third.

The fine hair of the miserable tormented girl was uprooted ; the skin pulled from her forehead, and even from her cheeks, drawn violently towards the ears, threatened to tear away ; the lips half opened seemed to laugh, the almond eyes elongated to the temple gave the girl the appearance of a fawn. Painful even to look at, much more to suffer it ! Luciani, with his arms still stretched like a dog at rest, kept howling from time to time :

“ Confess the truth.”

“ I am innocent.”

“ Give her a little shake—another—another still. Confess the truth.”

“ I am innocent.”

“ Ah ! You do not want to confess ? Very well. Carlino, add to it the binding *canubis*.”

Carlino immediately obeying the mandate, aided by some assistants, bound with a rope the wrist of Beatrice's right hand, and twisted it strongly as washerwomen when they wring a wet cloth to squeeze out the water. The hand and arm cracked dislocating, the muscles were torn, the skin lacerated with spots of

clotted blood, and monstrous swellings. Chief Justice Luciani, without moving an eyelid, at every contortion barked out :

“ Confess the crime !”

“ My God !—my God !”

“ Confess your crime, I tell you !”

“ Oh God of heaven—support your innocent creature.”

“ Bind her tighter, and shake her more fiercely ; thus, resolutely,—a twist and a shake at the same time.”

“ Ah ! mother, mother ! A drop of water—I am dying—for pity sake—one single drop.”

“ A drop, or no drop ! Confess I say.”

“ I ”——

“ Come, that is right—you are ?”

“ I am innocent.”

At this point the fury of Luciani lost all bounds : blind with rage, trembling with anger, he bit his lower lip with his upper teeth in such a way, as to leave the marks upon them, some black, and some dropping blood.

“ Bind her tighter—crush her bones,” screamed in a fury the chief of the assassins, then called judges ; “ until it shall wring from her throat the confession of the crime.”

“ Alas ! what torments—what martyrdom is this ! I am a Christian—I have been baptized.—O death ! death !”

“ Confess—con ”——

A fearful cough interrupted Luciani at this moment, which seemed as if choking him : his throat and chest panted convulsively : foam dropped from his mouth and nostrils ; his eyes veined with blood projected from their orbits, and notwithstanding he screamed ravingly :

“ Con—confess—confess—you impious creature !”

“ I am innocent.”

“ Here—quick, the fine ropes—the torture of the fine ropes.”

This was an infamous contest ; the bystanders were wearied

of the spectacle ; the executioners themselves tired of the labor, Beatrice gave no sign of life.

“ The fine ropes, I tell you—the fine ropes ;” roared Luciani between one cough and another.

The executioner’s assistants stood motionless, and rage choked Luciani, who now only stammered indistinct sounds. The former in fact would not imagine the Chief Justice to be in his right senses ; since the torture of the fine ropes consisted of an infinite number of small, thin and cutting ropes, with which they bound the tortured one in such a manner, that cutting the nerves, the flesh and veins, the body would become one wound ; and it seemed evident that it could not have been applied to the patient in such a state, without dispatching her entirely.

Upon the threshold of the door, opposite the bench of the judges, appeared the livid face of master Alessandro : he stopped awhile, turned a sad look upon the scene, and he seemed, although an executioner, to feel something, for in attempting to button his red dress his hand shook from one button-hole to the other without being able to accomplish it : except this indication there was nothing manifest which could give one an idea of emotion : he coolly approached the patient, looked fixedly at her, and felt her pulse ; this done, with that expression, which could make not only the condemned but even the judges shudder, turning to Luciani, he said :

“ Your Honor, let us understand plainly ; do you wish the patient to confess, or die ?”

“ Die now ?—God forbid ! She must confess first.”

“ Then for to-day she cannot bear any more tortures.”

Thus in those times the executioner taught humanity and propriety to the judges : in our times no one teaches it to them ; they know it by themselves.

“ Master Alessandro,” broke forth Luciani maddened, “ I think I know as much as you do of your profession, and ”——

Notary Ribaldella, who hung to the fortunes of Luciani as to his anchor of hope, fearing some imminent scandal, with an hypocritical expression cut short his words saying :

"Your Honor, who is such a famous master of proverbs, must remember what you have told me so many times, that, 'a bow long bent at last waxeth weak : ' if your Honor allows me I would suggest . . ."

"Come, speak," answered Luciani crossly.

Then Ribaldella rose hastily from his seat, and approaching the ear of Luciani whispered his idea. It must have been a truly infernal one ; since Luciani, who had listened with a disturbed expression, calmed himself at once, and almost smiling said to him :

"Giacomo, you will be sure to succeed." Then turning to the executioner, he continued : "Master Alessandro, you may suspend the tortures, comfort the patient, and endeavor to revive her. You, my honorable colleagues, be kind enough to await me a few moments on your benches." Saying this he disappeared.

About twenty minutes after, a sound of chains was heard from the corridor where Luciani had gone, and soon after the door opened, and Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci with Lucrezia Petroni appeared, emaciated like persons who had suffered a great deal, and had not yet recovered from the suffered torments. Luciani followed them as a driver who follows the herd going to slaughter.

After the night of the arrest Giacomo and Bernardino had never seen each other, nor Lucrezia Petroni. All of a sudden they heard the doors of their prison open, and found themselves, without knowing why or how, in the arms of each other.

One may imagine how very sad and full of relief and affliction it was for these unfortunates to meet, to weep and kiss each other, although their chained arms permitted them no other demonstration of love.

After they had somewhat calmed their outburst of affection, Luciani, who bit his nails to repress his impatience, addressed them, and notified them of what he termed the invincible obstinacy of Beatrice. This most reproachful obstinacy of hers, added he, was a great obstacle to the conclusion of the trial, and consequently delayed the mercy of the Pontiff, which was ready to pour out, after this act of humility, like the waters under the rod of the holy patriarch Moses : as for himself he felt much grieved for the tortures, which the painful duty of his office imposed, and to which he had been obliged to subject Beatrice ; now his heart failed him ; they must come then to his aid in conquering her obstinate mind ; he as a friend and Christian, not as a judge, begged them to do this ; they must be assured that they had no better advocate to influence His Holiness in their favor than himself.

It is an easy thing to deceive those who trust ! It is very pleasant to believe that which one desires ! So much had these unfortunates desire of consolation, that the brothers Cenci, and Lady Lucrezia abandoned themselves entirely to the hands of Luciani ; who, having become very mild, promised them they should not be again separated. He had hurried them before him, overcome and deceived, and one could read plainly in his expression the pride of triumph.

The victories of force, are they more or less glorious than those of fraud ? I know not : I only know that force and fraud were twin born of injustice.

When the two Cencis and Lady Petroni saw the merciless outrage of the divine body of Beatrice, and herself like a dead person, they broke forth into unrestrained weeping, and knelt around her, kissing the hem of her garments—they dared not touch her lacerated hands, for fear of increasing her pain. In truth it was painful to see that miserable family, with their hands bound with chains, kneeling around the fainting Beatrice as if



they were worshipping her. Thus they remained a long time : when Beatrice revived, long before opening her eyes, a sorrowful groaning smote her ears, so that she imagined she was where human souls become purged of their sins, and worthy of ascending to heaven ; which idea was the more confirmed when, regaining the sense of sight, she saw herself surrounded by the dear, but emaciated faces of her beloved relatives : at which she, as if pleased, exclaimed :

“ Finally then, thank God, I am dead !”

And she shut her eyes again ; but the sharp pain which tormented her, too well told her she was still alive. She reopened her eyes, and said :—

“ Alas ! my beloved, in what a state do I see you again ?”

“ And we you, Beatrice ? Alas ! alas !”

After a little while Don Giacomo rose to his feet, and the noise of his chains around his body served as a mournful exordium to the following language, which he addressed to his sister :

“ Sister, I beg you, by the cross of our Lord Jesus, not to allow such ill usage of yourself. Confess what they have made us confess. What can we do ? I see no other way of escape ; and, if nothing else, this pretended confession of ours will save us from tortures which have no end, and with one blow will cut short torments and life. The wrath of God walks over our heads : can we pretend to oppose that terrible power which uproots the mountains from their granite foundations, and blows them, as the wind the grains of sand ? I bend to the lash with which God scourges me, before whom I bow ; and since to contend is of no avail, I endeavor to mitigate the rigor of my destiny with prayers, humility, and tears.”

Bernardino sighing and raising his little hands imploringly, continued also :

“ Do, Beatrice, confess for my sake ; tell everything these gentlemen wish, for then the Lord Justice has promised to let



me be unbound, and to send all of us into the country for the harvest."

Lady Lucrezia resigned, in her turn said :

"Trust in the Holy Madonna of Sorrows, my dear daughter ; she alone is the consoler of the afflicted : and beside, who among us can boast of being spotless ? We all are sinners."

Beatrice, as they begged her, by degrees turned her eyes around threateningly. By chance they happened to meet those of Luciani, which sparkled with malignant exultation—now almost sure of the success of his plan to entrap them. Anger, contempt, and above all, an infinite sense of disgust agitated the mind of Beatrice, so that she was about to break forth in words: still she refrained them ; not so much however, but that these different passions were seen to pass over her forehead, like clouds across the disk of the moon. Then calming herself somewhat, with a feeble voice, which by degrees increased, resolutely and courageously she began to admonish her relatives in the following words :

"That you were not able to resist the trial of the torture, and bent to the first assaults of pain, and threw away your good fame, as the soldier abandons his sword in the day of battle, I have heard with infinite bitterness of my soul ; but I abstain from reproaching you : only allow me to turn severely to you, and ask why do you wish me to share your shame ? Two were to be queens of sorrows ; one in heaven, the other on earth ; and I am the earthly one. Do not envy, I beg of you, my crown of martyrdom, since I wear it more gloriously than if it was of gems. Listen ! Holy men have taught us that we cannot turn our murderous hands against our bodies, which are God's work, without doing violence to His supreme will : now, how much more sinful must it be in us to destroy with our own venomous tongues our reputation, which is the life of the soul ! And mark me ! life seems to be more our own property, and hence we are

more the masters of its destruction than of our fame ; for the latter we must give to our descendants, and we should hate them to be ashamed of their own name, or be subjected to hear it said, 'your name recalls a parricide.'—Pagan Rome saw a courtesan endure with great constancy unheard of tortures, and cutting out her tongue with her teeth threw it in the faces of her executioners, rather than disclose the conspiracy in which she had too well participated ; and I, an honest and Christian maiden, shall I not be able to support torments in testimony of my innocence ? Unfortunates ! What do you hope to obtain by your cowardice ? Perhaps to preserve your life ? Do you not see, that they wish it extinguished not as an end, but as a means to lead to an intent already established ; nor is our death enough to this intent, which they would have already given us, but it requires also our infamy ? Now, have you thought what this intent may be ? Who can look into the abyss of iniquity of the Roman court, and perceive all the dark designs which are planned therein ? In my passed agony a phantom crossed the darkness of my mind, and a thousand voices cried after it : 'avarice ! avarice ?' The priestly she-wolf, having already tasted the property of the Cencis, and finding it good, its hunger has increased by the food. Many are the wolves with sharpened teeth who have come from Florence, showing their naked ribs, and gnashing teeth, crying out for prey. And the Pope will give it to them. **YOUR PROPERTY IS YOUR CRIME !** You will lose all ; the spotless fame, which no one in the world could have taken from you, you have yourself thrown away ; life and property, frail things and in the power of others, they will take from you when they think fit. I cannot prevent them from cutting short my days, and with my life stealing also my property ; and even if willing, I could not prevent it ; but my fame is in my hand, they will not be able to steal this from me. While all that which belongs to earth has left me, behold two angels bind themselves closer

to my spirit ; the one who has the keeping of innocence, and the other who rewards constancy ; I feel their power, dear ones, to be great over me, since not only they sustain me in the midst of the anguish of my torments, but they promise me as soon as they are ended (which will happen soon) to raise me kneeling upon their holy wings towards my Creator. Farewell earth, mud wet with tears and blood ; farewell crowd of malignant atoms, who call yourself men ; farewell time, briefest mark on the face of Eternity : a ray of celestial joy falls upon me, and removes every pain—how happy I feel ! I am satisfied ! how sweet it is to die !”

And her head falling over her shoulder, she fainted again.

The sun, until then covered with clouds, shone forth in this dark place from a high window, and surrounded with a lingering autumnal ray the face of Beatrice. Her golden hair scattered over her shoulders, and which had remained rough and twisted over her forehead, reflecting that ray, girded it around with the luminous crown, with which the image of the mother of Christ is usually painted. Wonderful incident ! which showed how Providence began to take the afflicted girl under the mantle of mercy ; for in her hair, used on that day as an instrument of shocking martyrdom, began to appear a manifest sign of her approaching sanctity.

No one dared to breathe. Luciani was astounded, having surprised his soul in the act of softening : abhorred compassion had for a moment caused in him the same effect which the Gentiles attributed to the head of Medusa. Ribaldella, with his face leaning over the bench, held a kind of pious truce with his perfidious thoughts ; and notary Grifo, not to commit himself, mended mechanically the pens, but could not see to cut, because a tear loitered in the corner of his eye : poor tear ! it stood in that place like an exile in Siberia !

Beatrice with a sigh returned to life, and her relations kneel-

ing before her, excited by admiration, pity, and shame, exclaimed sobbing :

“ Beatrice—holy angel—oh ! point to us the path which we should keep to imitate you.”

Beatrice rose a little, and, gathering her utmost strength, said in a loud voice :

“ Know how to die !”

“ And we will die,” cried Don Giacomo, starting to his feet, and shaking in the face of the Judges the chains with which he was bound ; “ we are innocent, we neither killed nor caused our father to be killed : we confessed through pain of the torture, and by means of the snares prepared for our inexperience.”

And Giacomo Cenci could also be called innocent of his father’s murder, for he was not killed at Tagliacozzo : however his conscience was not pure before men, much less before God. And in truth the design more or less near to its execution is by the laws distinguished from the committed crime ; in God’s eyes, however, the criminal thought hardly escaped returns to kill the soul, which did not hold it back.

Beatrice, almost changed in her face by her internal ecstasy, and with a sweet voice like a mother’s blessing, concluded :

“ Martyrdom upon earth is called a glory in heaven : persevere, and die as the faithful of Christ died.”

Chief Justice Luciani had easily got rid of the unusual sting of humanity as a temptation of the devil ; seeing that in his new experiment, instead of having gained, as he had supposed, he had lost not a little, his rage rekindled again, and burst forth like boiling water out of the kettle, noisy and foaming :

“ We will try you again, and shall see whether you will maintain yourselves as strong by deeds as in words. In the meanwhile you, master Alessandro, apply to the prisoner the torture of the *taxillo*.”

“ Have I heard right, your Honor ? Did you say the *taxillo* ?”

“The *taxillo* ; yes, the *taxillo* : what of it !”

“Nothing,” replied master Alessandro, shrugging his shoulders ; “I thought I didn’t hear rightly.”

“And he went for the *taxillo*

The *taxillo* was a small fine wedge, large in its base, sharp on the point, and soaked with turpentine and pitch. The devil, transformed into a Dominican friar, invented in Spain this torture.

The brothers Cenci and lady Lucrezia, benumbed stared upon what happened under their eyes (master Alessandro bringing the small wedge, undressed the left foot of Beatrice. Short, smooth and round, it seemed the work of a Greek chisel in pink alabaster) and they saw him insert the sharp point of the wedge betwixt the flesh and nails of the toes : they shuddered at the sight, but what new form of torment it was they could not well understand. They will soon learn. Master Alessandro took a taper and lighted it at the candle which burned before the holy image of the Redeemer ; then approached it to the wedge, which immediately took fire. The flame rapidly approached the foot, and rushed like a tongue, as if greedy of flesh and blood.

Most horrible was the pain which came from this torture ; human nature could not resist it, how much the less when we consider the sufferings already borne by the poor girl ; and nevertheless, Beatrice fearing on the one hand to discourage her relatives, and on the other designing to give them an example of how one should suffer, conquered her anguish, and was silent. She was silent, truly ; and taking the flesh of her cheek between her teeth she pressed it so as to fill her mouth with blood, to divert one pain with another ; but she had no power to prevent the intense shudder which crisped the skin of her body, nor the rolling of her wandering eyes, nor the convulsive spasm, which the creature gasps in the last hour of death—nor had she power, poor girl ! to withhold a cry desperately shrill, in which it seem-



ed that her life was cut short, and to bow her head like a dead person.

Even the hare, reduced to desperation, forgets his natural timidity, and bites. Don Giacomo did not fear to approach with his face the burning wedge, and to seize it with his teeth trying to detach it ; but he derived no other advantage than that of burning his face. Then all of them, not even excepting the mild lady Lucrezia, urged by a spontaneous instinct rushed against Luciani, showing a desire to tear him with their teeth : they roared like wild animals, nor did their faces seem any longer human. Although this was an impotent rage, since they had their hands chained, and the balustrade would prevent their approach to the judges, still Luciani was frightened, and starting to his feet, made a shelter for himself with the back of a chair ; behind which, as from a bulwark, he barked :

“ Look out lest they untie themselves ! Hold them ! They are of the Cenci race, and tear to pieces ! ”

Master Alessandro, availing himself of the confusion, had let the *taxillo* fall from the foot of Beatrice.

The Cencis were easily held. Luciani was agitated, and seeing his colleagues and the other assistants, although through different causes, more frightened than himself, thought it convenient to suspend such tortures, which in those times had the name of examinations.

“ Take them back,” roared Luciani, standing upon the threshold of the door, “ take them back to prison ; separate one from the other ; give them the food of penitence—let them drink torments—let them eat despair.”

Beatrice fainting was carried back on a chair to her prison, and there intrusted to the care of the physician ; who between one sigh and another observed, that “ the prisoner could not be subjected efficaciously to the torments before an entire week ; and he would have the courage, he added, in case of need, to sustain



it by words or in writing, because before all one should always have some regard to humanity."

Does it not seem, that this amiable Doctor was a very humane man ?

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SACRIFICE.

Non sentite che stridio  
Fa quel gufo colassù ?  
È là un' aquila che sgraffia !  
Quanti corvi intorno a lei !  
Quanti corvi a molestarla !  
Presto, indietro, figli miei.

\* \* \* \* \*

Van gl' infanti :—e don Rodrigo  
Ha già scritto ad Almanzor :  
Vengon tutti, e senza schermo  
Tutti a morte gli hai da por.

I SETTE INFANTI DI LARA, ROMANZA SPAGNUOLA.

“INTRODUCE him immediately.”

Thus commanded Cinzio Passero, Cardinal of St. George, to his chamberlain, who had entered to announce that his Honor, Chief Justice Luciani very earnestly desired to speak to his Eminence. Luciani moved a few steps, and stopped in the middle of the room, bowing profoundly, and in this attitude he remained without uttering a word.

The Cardinal, casting down his eyes in order to hide his satisfaction, asked, in a slow voice and with pretended indifference—a forerunner of approaching ingratitude :

“Now, then, where are we now ? Is this great trial finally finished ?”

“Your Eminence,” replied Luciani, with his head hanging down, “sees in me renewed the case of Sisyphus.”

The Cardinal, less from the words than from the aspect of

Luciani, suspecting the cause, threw aside his feigned indifference as a wearisome mask, and angrily added :

“What does this mean? Speak without metaphors, for I am already tired of these.”

“Your Eminence, it means that we have not been able to obtain from the prisoner Beatrice a confession of any kind ; and the other Cencis, moved by her example, have retracted theirs.”

“But you—did you allow yourself to be affected by pity, too?”

“I!” exclaimed Luciani, as if he had heard a serious mistake : “eh, not exactly ! Ropes, your Eminence, torture *capillorum*, torture *vigiliæ*, *cannubioribus*, *rudentium*, *taxilli*, all I have used, and without any interval of time, so that I was astonished myself. If we had only continued the torture of the prisoner a little longer, by this time she would have been dispatched, with incalculable injury to the trial. I obliged her to remain three whole hours in a fainting fit.”

“And did she not confess with the *taxillo*?”

“Not even with the *taxillo*.”

“But do you make them of butter now?”

“No, your Eminence, we make them of pine wood, sharpened and covered with pitch as usual ; and I commanded all her tortures to be redoubled, until Master Alessandro himself advised us to suspend them, for she was in imminent danger of her life.”

“Who is this Master Alessandro?”

“The executioner, your Eminence.”

There are, in all languages, some words of such a sound, that they have the power to bitterly stir human nerves ; and the word executioner is without doubt one of these. The Cardinal shook his head disdainfully, as if to say, “What has the executioner to do with us?” To which silent question, Luciani, in his turn, as silently answered, “He has a *great deal* to do, and your anger is because he did *not* do as you desired. Oh man clothed in red,

related to the executioner in many ways, besides the color of your clothes."

"When you saw," said the Cardinal, "that severity availed nothing, why did you not have recourse to mildness?"

"Um! I have done everything, your Eminence. I even dared to promise (well understood on my part, however, so that your Eminence and his Holiness could take it back if you wished) pardon to all of them. I made those who had confessed see the girl when most likely weakened by torture, and beg her with tears and prayers to confess, at the same time assuring her that I had told them this would be their only means of safety. All breath thrown away! The girl, beyond all belief, obstinately despised both flattery and tortures; and after having suffered more than human nature seemed able to bear, in the midst of the torture from the *taxillo* begged her relatives to imitate her courage, and retract their confession. How it happened I cannot say, for I am almost doubtful in what world I am; they listened to her, revoked their confession, and again denied it. The hammer has given more strokes than is usually given; but sometimes the stone is harder than the hammer."

"No! you cannot persuade me that in this business you have used the care which my wishes should have enjoined."

"Indeed you suspect me wrongly. Consider, fearing the prisoner might have some witchery about her, I ordered (and directed the examination myself) that she should be carefully examined, to search for the diabolical spot indicated by necromancers."

The Cardinal shrugged his shoulders in contempt; and Luciani thought within himself, "A Cardinal of the Holy Mother Church does not believe in the devil! If he is dead, what will become of sinners?"

"Then," asked the Cardinal, "what do you propose to do?"

"Oh, I came here on purpose to learn the wise opinion of

your Eminence, who, as all the world knows, is so learned in such matters."

They exchanged glances ; already they hated each other. Avarice and cruelty make an infernal contract, which tenaciously binds the souls of the wicked until the consummation of the crime ; when finished, the accomplices share at the same time, plunder, hatred, and remorse.

The bloody deed accomplished, the Cardinal will hate Luciani with the double hatred of an ungrateful man, and an accomplice who detests his companion in crime ; Luciani will hate the Cardinal, finding him proud, and knowing him wicked ; and they do hate each other now, for the one does not hide his contempt for the other, and that other is afraid.

A light knock came to the door, a chamberlain entered, notifying his Eminence that the lawyer Prospero Farinaccio was awaiting an audience.

"Farinaccio !" exclaimed the Cardinal and Luciani, astonished. The Cardinal paused a moment, then said to the chamberlain :

"Let him come in. And you, Sir Luciani, be kind enough to await our orders in the anteroom."

A greater sting to Luciani's pride could not have been given. How ! He to give place to a lawyer ? He, to await the closing of an audience in the anteroom ? He, accustomed to treat his equals with arrogance, his inferiors with pride ! What would the servants think, while he awaited the conference of Farinaccio with the Cardinal ? And he to risk the salvation of his soul for such ungrateful men !

The great haste of Farinaccio to appear before the Cardinal and the preoccupation of Luciani in going out of the room, caused these two gentlemen to stumble against each other upon the threshold. The lawyer being stout and strong, and Luciani weak and lame with the gout, the latter would have reën-

tered the room like a crab, if he had not clung with both hands to the lawyer's dress. Farinaccio was not disposed to laugh at the accident ; on the contrary, wishing to correct with his tongue the involuntary fault of his body, he saluted Luciani politely, saying :

" Your Honor's most obedient servant. I beg your lordship's pardon ;" and Luciani, considering the credit that so obsequious a greeting from so great a lawyer might procure him among the servants, softened a little, and answered a little less fiercely than usual :

" Good morning, sir."

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" Your Eminence," began Farinaccio, after having bowed to the Cardinal with the usual frank and sincere manner which so well became him, " I will tell you plainly the reason which induced me to come with so much haste to pay my respects to your Eminence. I came to beg you to procure permission for me to assume the defence of the accused Cencis, in company with some of my learned colleagues."

" Sir Advocate," replied the Cardinal scowling, " what is this you ask ? Do you think those depraved people deserve the honor of your defence ? The enormity of their crime forbids it ; and it would be a strange thing to grant it, now the trial is finished."

" Your Eminence, defence is a divine right. The Lord granted it to Cain, and none knew him to be guilty more than the Lord himself."

" That is true ; but human prudence has decreed now-a-days that to an atrocious crime should be forbidden such benefits ; and among these, parricide must be considered the greatest. Tell me, Sir Advocate, did these cruel children grant their father



time for a defence ? Or did they—and this seems more enormous still—give him time to reconcile himself to God, and save his soul ?”

“I do not deny this, your Eminence ; but allow me humbly to observe, that for this very reason, being an exceptional case, we must not go by common laws, where all is given up to the discretion of a judge.”

“Certainly, but by all which belongs to the greatest rigor ; for were it different (and this cannot escape your wisdom), the benefit would increase in proportion to the depravity of the crime. Does this seem good logic ?”

“But in the world something more powerful than logic rules, and it is propriety. I will not remind your Eminence by how many favors I feel bound to the sacred person of his Holiness and yourself, nor with what zeal I have always studied, and still study to promote, according to my weak powers, the exaltation of your most noble house—I fulfill in this way a duty of gratitude, that is all. I have taken the liberty to briefly mention this, that your Eminence may be persuaded that if you can find a more authoritative counsel, you cannot find so easily a more devoted one. Your Eminence must know, then, that for several days a rumor has spread through Rome, and it increases daily, which says, it is incredible to think that Bernardino, a boy of only twelve, of mild disposition, could have participated in this parricide ; much less could the girl ” (this however was not true, nay the contrary opinion was prevailing) “ whose wonderful beauty, which is remarkable, and the courage with which she underwent the most rigid experiments of justice, have obtained for her a deep compassion. Calumny whispers in a low tone from ear to ear that it is purposed to entangle the Cencis in the same accusation, and consequently to the same condemnation, in order to ensnare the property of this wealthy family ; it has caused extraordinary rancor among the nobility to see threatened with entire

destruction an illustrious race, which they affirm to be sprung from the most ancient Romans. I believe, and many with me think so, that in order to remove every ground for slander, it will be best to grant the accused a defence, and counsel, and all the forensic aid of the bar. They say : ‘ How can a boy, and an inexperienced girl defend themselves from these old foxes of the bar, frightened by threats, encompassed with snares ? ’ ”

Cardinal Cinzio was startled by these words ; but accustomed as he was to subdue the impetuosity of his temper, and to dissimulate, he had kindly assented to all the Advocate said, and even smiled upon him : for that timidity which makes priests merciless, also makes them irresolute : and he who knows how to take advantage of this vice, can rely upon succeeding, at least while fear lasts. But here, the Cardinal could no longer refrain, and exclaimed with ill suppressed rage :

“ How dare you suspect such horrible things ? ”

“ Eh ! It is not I who suspects ; it is calumny, which says all this, and also adds, that confession extracted by means of most atrocious tortures may not be relied on ; and it would have been a much shorter way to have let them die within some trap at night.”

The Cardinal, to restrain his anger, chewed some paper. Farinaccio, a very cunning man, knew he had struck the hardest blow, and now sought to flatter the purpled priest ; so he added :

“ It grieves me, your Eminence, really pains me, to hear science and the reputation of others thus assaulted : for in my writings I have always proclaimed torture to be the queen of proofs : nor would I have come here, if I did not know how this atrocious crime happened, and did not flatter myself to draw from the accused a sincere confession, which, will not only confound all slander, but will also offer a way for the Blessed Father’s innate clemency to appear, the rays of which have so often spread throughout the world.”

“ And do you really flatter yourself you can make them confess ?” asked the Cardinal more calmly.

“ I hope so ?”

“ All of them ?”

“ All !”

“ Sir Farinaccio, you assume a load too heavy for your shoulders ; at least I fear so, for they show an obstinacy equal to their depravity : and you know that the gates of mercy may open to the humble prayer of the repentant, and not to the haughty knocking of the obstinate. The trial besides contains proofs enough to conquer a Pyrrhus. We are not in the habit of minding the people’s murmurs. Does the eagle fear the snake ? The eagle can seize the snake in his talons and lift it to the clouds, to dash it afterward upon the stones. We have the means in our power of silencing tongues and preventing one lip from joining the other : we possess, and you know it, instruments by which the word of the Holy Scripture which says : ‘ they have eyes and see not, ears have they but hear not,’ may be literally verified : and we know how to use them.”

“ Oh ! I mentioned this myself,” Farinaccio hastened to reply, who beginning to fear he had gone too far, now thought of making an honorable retreat ; “ nor did I hesitate to make it understood as it deserves ; nay, moved by the knowledge of your great magnanimity and famous judgment, I concluded to tell it all openly to you, so that everything may be done quietly, without noise, and without scandal, in the way most suitable to the wishes and justice of your Eminence. And for this very reason, to all those who seemed anxious to inform your Eminence of the humors of these Roman brains, I said : ‘ What do you fear ? ignorant people ! you do not know how much goodness there is in the heart of the Cardinal St. George ; how much love, how much zeal for all that which is proper and decorous to the Holy Catholic Seat, and to the dignity of his illustrious house.’

And to confirm my words by deeds, I resolved to come and speak to you about it ; hence I now humbly beg you to take my proceeding in good part ; and to pay more attention to the reason which induced me to speak, than to the words, and to pardon those which unintentionally may have seemed too free, or bold."

Farinaccio's words seemed unaccountable to the Cardinal : he could not understand his motives ; and accustomed as he was to suspect even good intentions, he was puzzled about this mysterious visit. He neither granted nor refused the request of Farinaccio ; he took time to think of it, and the pretext of being obliged to confer with His Holiness, furnished him with a very good excuse for delay. They took leave of each other rather satisfied, than otherwise ; Farinaccio, because he hoped to succeed in his desire of speaking with the prisoners, and counselling and directing them in their defence : the Cardinal, because he relied upon the insinuation of Farinaccio in obtaining the confession from the prisoners and obviating in this way the suspicions which he felt he too well deserved. Both were aware that their game was equal ; both felt they were deceiving each other ; and yet both knew that one was necessary to the other for the purpose of accomplishing their mutual design.

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Farinaccio on turning the corner of the street, opened the door of a carriage, which stood awaiting him, and speaking to some person within, said :

"The plot works well, your Eminences. Do not lose a single moment of time, but strike while the iron is hot. Fear has him by the hair : should she leave him, we shall never catch him again."

Farinaccio was at the same time both right and wrong in his

reasoning ; he rightly guessed that fear ruled the soul of the Cardinal ; but he wrongly imagined that this rendered him more mild towards the prisoners ; since, having need of their confession to proceed with a firm foot and erect head to the cruel conclusion of his purpose, and having in his conversation with Luciani despaired of obtaining it by torture, he seized upon Farinaccio as a lever to move the stone which was an obstacle in his path. To believe oneself more cunning than another is the rock against which the boldest often break ; and the proverb rightly says, " that in the furrier's shop are more skins of foxes than asses."

Before continuing my narrative, it is necessary to say a few words about Prospero Farinaccio, who is to take so prominent a part in the events of this history, and tell who he was ; and why he so warmly undertook the defence of the Cencis.

Farinaccio was born of humble parents, but not so unprovided with Fortune's gifts as to prevent their educating him in the liberal studies ; sent to the university of Padua, he attended to the study of law, in which he succeeded wonderfully. Returning home he soon distinguished himself as a man of superior talents, and easily acquired the reputation of being one of the greatest lawyers of the Roman bar. He possessed indeed great learning (for that of the lawyers of those times cannot be called science) and had gathered materials sufficient to publish thirteen large volumes, which we see now displayed upon our lawyers' shelves. He cannot be compared to Bacon of Verulam his contemporary, but he was looked upon, being well skilled in forensic learning, as the greatest of his times. Restless and insinuating, by great industry he was often able successfully to conduct defences which were looked upon as desperate ; and this gained for him a great reputation for learning, even by those judges who had yielded to his importunity rather than to his arguments, for they preferred to confess themselves conquered by science, rather than overcome by weariness. Vitality was superabundant in him,



and not finding sufficient labor in the exercise of his profession—since the age in which he lived did not allow him to attend to public affairs—he had been led into dissipation.

Such was his temperament, that having spent the whole night in gambling and revelry, the next morning found him more ready and prepared for his work than ever. He plunged with so much eagerness into a sea of vice, that in a short time exhausting all that tract which is sin's dominion, he soon arrived at the borders of crime ; and some say that he leaped over that ; but by virtue of his talents and by the powerful protection he had in the Roman court, he always succeeded in clearing himself of it. Clement VIII., a lawyer himself, and having studied at Rome, Bologna, and Salamanca, he was reputed a very eminent one, had known a great deal of him while he was auditor of the Rota, and often had said : " he is a bad bag, but full of good flour."

As he was liberal in giving, so he was ready in taking : he contracted as many debts as he could, sometimes through necessity, but oftener through a natural taste ; esteeming the ties of friendship little, and not knowing those of relationship, he used to say that according to his ideas, the strongest tie which could keep men bound together was the one of debt, for three ropes kept the knot fast ; the benevolence of the creditor for the debtor, the hope of deriving a large profit from him, and the fear of losing both interest and principal, and he firmly declared, that even the sword of Alexander would have been powerless, had it tried to cut it. Yet, notwithstanding all this, under that heap of vice was hidden the best of hearts, open to generous acts, provided they took little time ; and to sacrifices, on condition they would not take him too much from his predominating passions. Quickly moved to anger, and equally quick in calming himself, he would pass from tears to laughter, and was soon forgetful of even the saddest event ; taking advantage of the example of King David, who fasted and prayed, while his son lay ill, and when he died



arose from the ground and ate and drank, saying, "Hail to the living, and good bye to the dead?"

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One morning towards the end of the month of August, a coalman, leaving at the door of a lawyer's office four mules loaded with bags of coal, boldly entered the ante-room with both his hands in his pockets, and his hat cocked on one side like a duke's. The clerks, glancing at him, did not move, but continued their writing without raising their heads from their desks.

"Oh there! is the lawyer in?"

"Here? no—he may be at home."

"I ask you if he is here, not at home."

"Suppose he is! do you think he is going to buy coal in his office? Do you believe we roast our clients?"

"God forbid! I have only heard that you sometimes skin them. But no matter for that, I do not wish to sell him coal, only to speak to him on business."

"You?—You indeed?"

"I—exactly so—I. Is there anything strange in that? Cannot we speak to the Pope, who has his ears in his feet? and why not then to the lawyer Prospero Farinaccio who wears them on his head, I suppose?"

"But do you know who the famous lawyer Farinaccio is?"

"Of course I do! He is a man as I am; is he son of the Coliseum, or does he boast of being cousin to King Porsenna? Come, you may as well announce me, for I know he is in his room."

"What an obstinate blockhead he is!" murmured the head clerk in a low tone; he then in a louder voice added:

"He is engaged."

"Then I will wait."

A little while after, the door opened and Farinaccio appeared on the threshold, who, on dismissing some person who had been closeted with him, observed the coalman, and with a courteous manner asked him in, saying :

“How can I serve you? Speak, and sit down if you please.”

“I will speak standing. Tell me, have you heard the Cencis’ trial talked of?”

“I? How would it be possible not to hear of it? It is the only thing which keeps Rome at present in an excitement.”

“And have you not heard a voice in your heart, speaking in behalf of these unfortunate people?”

“I have indeed! And even now I feel compassion for them;—nay, to speak plainly, I will tell you, that the secrecy of the trial, the unusual preparations, the dismissal of Chief Justice Moscati, a compassionate and worthy man, and the appointment of Luciani, a man more cruel than torture itself, the age of the accused, the probable incompetency of all, or the greater part of them, to defend themselves, and many other things upon which I ought to be silent, oppress my mind, and cause me to suspect some abominable plot.”

“Then tell me, tell me, why you, whose defence was never refused to the most infamous culprits, should now show yourself so chary of it towards these betrayed people?”

“Because, having duly considered the affair, I have concluded, should I work in this ground, I should only break my spade—I have already told you; that I fear in this a secret persecution—and a powerful one too—I fear that this is not to be a judgment, but a juridical assassination. I see, or seem to see, justice armed, not with sword of the law, but with the dagger of the assassin and”

“Continue, Sir Advocate,” said the coalman with trembling voice, seeing him hesitate to go on.

Farinaccio rose from his chair, and went to the door to see if it was shut ; returning, he continued :

“ There is a rumor, although I doubt it, that the Cencis being very wealthy, and the Pope’s nephews very poor and avaricious, a pretext is sought to make this wealth revert to the apostolic See, and then by some means or other, which can easily be found at court, transmit it to this herd of starving nobles.”

“ How ? By the murder of four innocent beings ?”

“ Cardinals wear red robes, that blood may not be distinguished upon them.”

“ But have you not the right of defending the widow and orphan ? Is not a lawyer’s profession considered a most glorious one, for the very reason of the danger which it runs in defending the cause of innocence cruelly persecuted ?”

“ True, and that is the reason why this calling is preferred to the more learned ones, and there is in fact a law of the Emperors Leone and Artemio—but, coalman, I should have asked you before—pray, who are you ?”

“ Alas ! Sir Advocate, do not seek to know : I am a man,—and let this touch you—a man who has not his equal in misery in this world.

“ No. Confidence for confidence. How can you expect me to open my mind to you if you intend to keep secret from me ?”

“ We are not on equal terms. I do not doubt your discretion, still less your honor : neither am I deterred by fear, for no greater evil can befall me than the one I now bear ; and yet I beg of you to let me preserve my secret.”

These words contained so much of humility in their entreaty, and went so mildly to the heart of Farinaccio, that it seemed rudeness in him to insist, and he only said :

“ Well, so be it, then ; I will tell you ” (and he spoke in lower tones) “ that I believe the public rumors are but too true ; and how can I, believing so, without a certainty of suc-

cess, take upon my shoulders so heavy and dangerous a load ? You, my friend, look as if you knew as well as I know what Dante said :

‘ Chè quando l’argomento della mente  
Si aggiunge al mal volere ed alla possa,  
Nessun riparo vi può far la gente.’ ”

“ Then you have the heart to let these creatures, as innocent as our Saviour, perish without a defence ? ”

“ You must know, in the first place, that the defence of parricides is not a right, but sometimes is granted as a favor ; in the second place, tell me how can you prove they are innocent ? ”

“ I ?—I *can* prove it, because—because it was I—who killed Count Cenci.”

“ You ? Pray, who are you ? ”

“ I am he whom you, through courtesy, allowed to remain unknown. I killed him with these very hands, and would do it again, at the very moment when he was about to outrage nature.”

He then explained all the particulars of the affair, confiding every secret of the family, and the deeds, words, and habits of the murdered Count, and also the virtue and wonderful courage of his daughter Beatrice.

Farinaccio endeavored, while he was speaking, to recognize him ; and not succeeding, the idea that he might be Monsignore Guido Guerra passed through his mind ; but having known him very well, he did not think the coalman’s features, face, gestures, or even his voice resembled him.

At the conclusion of his words, the coalman raised his eyes to Farinaccio to see their effect ; but the latter kept his face thoughtfully down. After a long pause he said :

“ If I should say to you, go and present yourself to justice as the murderer, would you do it ? ”

"This very moment, if it would save them."

"No—no, you would only be a victim more, you could not take the lamb from the wolf's mouth. Love is as fatal to this unhappy girl as hatred. People charge her with the murder of her father, to give her a crown of glory ; the Pope accuses her in order to steal her property. A hard fate !" (and he struck his hand upon his forehead) "a hard fate indeed."

"Ah, Sir Farinaccio, do not abandon them, for pity sake."

"I am not a favorite at court," continued Farinaccio, still to himself, "and I fear that if they should get a chance now, they would hack and cut me like a piece of French cloth."

"At court, I know people who would surely aid you, and I am sure you would find the Cardinals Sforza and Barberini very ready to second you."

"That would be something. But how can I present myself to these great people ?"

"Go boldly ; you will find them informed of every thing."

Yet one could read in Farinaccio's face that he was "at war 'twixt will and will not ;" but the coalman with sad voice said :

"Now that you know all, can you let them perish without help ?"

"But if I should be lost too ?"

"A benefit which is calculated, is no benefit."

This dialogue had been carried on with so much passion on both sides, that Guido Guerra, forgetting himself spoke in his natural voice : and Farinaccio could not help exclaiming :

"You are Monsignore Guido Guerra !"

"I—yes, I was."

"*Hœu quantum mutatus ab illo !*" exclaimed Farinaccio, giving him his hand, which the other pressed affectionately saying :

"Now that you know my misery, now that my misfortunes force you to weep, will you let me become desperate ?"

"Well, *alea jacta est*. However, let me confess, I pass the

Rubicon with a greater weight than I ever felt before on my heart. God will help us ! This time I think the fish will draw the fishermen in : but it is not that which troubles me ; I am afraid that I may take such steps that, instead of leading to a good result, may involve them all in utter ruin. I know the Cenci family can hardly fall into a worse condition than their present one ; but I do not wish to be the one to give them a final push. However, be not discouraged, for I will not act slowly or irresolutely on account of this ; no, rather take courage from the example of our Redeemer, whom in this case, although most unworthy, I resemble. He begged that the bitter cup might pass from him, but he accepted it with all his heart, and drank of it courageously. Now go ; and rest assured that as much as my brains can work or my mouth can say, I will use for the safety of your friends."

" And for this I came to you ; in case of failure, however, some other plans may be of use. You will see her—you will see Lady Beatrice I mean. Do not speak to her of me at all ; or rather, yes, speak to her of it—and give her this ring, which will at once gain her confidence in you. Her father's blood stands between us—it is just, but I shed it for her ; I love her, and she cannot cease to love me ; always bound to each other, and yet for ever divided ; our love is a flower which death will gather." He then loosened a belt which he wore around his waist, and gave a purse to Farinaccio ; the lawyer made a motion as if to refuse it, and his cheeks grew red ; but Lord Guerra said :

" Indeed I do not intend with this or other money to reward you for your work ; I profess myself grateful to you through life, and in refusing you would only grieve me ; I have too many troubles already, Sir Farinaccio, and you know it."

Though the lawyer kept not his purpose of refusing the money, he felt it melting away like snow in the sun, for in a few days



his debts to Sampson the Jew must be paid ; the Jew to whom Farinaccio had applied the line of Martial :

*" Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te."*

which he thus translated :

*" Neither can I live with thee,  
Oh Jew, nor without thee !"*

Farinaccio when left alone stood meditating for some time upon the singularity of the affair, and the misfortunes which oppressed the unhappy Cenci family. Then he immediately revolved in his mind, how to carry out his plan of defence, which he soon decided upon ; it was an uncertain and truly dangerous one, but it was the only one which he deemed might prove successful. It was one of Farinaccio's greatest faults, that, possessing a quick perception of things, and in his multiplicity of business having no time to study his cases deeply, he would generally seize upon the first ideas that came into his mind, and obstinately keep them. To tell the truth, he almost always hit the mark ; but if he erred there was no remedy ; for immediately following the execution of his ideas, he would shut off all means of retracing his steps. Finally, as an amen to all his meditations, came the money of Lord Guerra into his thoughts. He would have preferred not to have taken it ; but as he had, he locked it safely into his desk, and immediately after started for the palaces of the Cardinals Sforza and Barberini, whom he found favorable to his undertaking, and kindly disposed to aid him with their influence. He arranged with them the interview with the Cardinal nephew, Cinzio Passero, and the means to be used in this delicate business ; and they, very ready to assist the Cencis, offered themselves to wait in the place above mentioned, within a carriage without escutcheon, for the termination of the visit, and to plan then according to the turn of events.

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Chief Justice Luciani, tired of waiting, grumbled like a chained dog, but suddenly he heard his name called by a chamberlain, who said :

“ Your Honor, his Eminence dismisses you, and commands all proceedings to be suspended for the present, until farther orders.”

The chamberlain said this very haughtily, for servants usually possess the sense of smelling more acutely than bloodhounds, and know how to distinguish when one is blooming, when mature, and when about to fall from his master's favor. Luciani, offended by being thrown off like a horse's blanket on a hot day, and still more by the manner of the chamberlain, looked at him, as if to say :

“ Be careful you keep at a distance, for should you fall into my claws I will show you that a dog never bites me, without my answering in a like manner.” He then went off silently.

“ Did you notice how he looked at you ?” said a valet to the chamberlain ; “ You really showed him too much contempt.”

“ You should say honor. I would gladly have thrown him from the window like a leech which, by being too full of blood, becomes unable to bite.”

“ Take care not to throw it into the salt, for then disgorging his blood, he comes back to bite more acutely than before.”

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The Cardinals Barberini and Sforza presented themselves in the anteroom to pay their respects to his Eminence of St. George. They were immediately announced, and introduced in the midst of a great raising of hats and most profound bows. Afterwards from each side came the usual sincere salutations ; and after the visitors had repeatedly assured the Cardinal visited that they had merely come to pay their respects to him, he began to sound them upon the news then in Rome.

The Cardinals Sforza and Barberini, knowing how old birds are caught, kept him in suspense, and pretended ignorance of anything new ; so that Cardinal Cinzio was obliged to speak more openly. They pretending to enter unwillingly upon a subject which they had already agreed upon, and learned in memory, riveted the nail already driven by Farinaccio, adding a few inventions of their own, which they said only showed how unjust public judgments were, and induced a necessity, for the reputation of the Pontificate, to deny them solemnly ; especially as these were dangerous times for the Church, and heretics, not only in France but even in Italy, were too ready to receive and give credit to all such calumnies.

It is not necessary to relate all the discussions upon this topic held by these purple-robed men. It is enough to know that the Cardinals Barberini and Sforza played their parts so well, that they left Cardinal Passero very thoughtful, and almost persuaded to be lavish in concessions of defence to the Cencis ; for he hoped by this to reap more fruit than by severity. He then conferred with the Pope about it, whom he easily persuaded to be of his opinion ; and Farinaccio, flattered with a thousand caresses, had the satisfaction of hearing from the very mouth of the Cardinal nephews, Pietro Aldobrandino and Cinzio Passero, that for *his* sake the Pope had granted his request. From this first advantage Farinaccio drew a good omen, and rejoiced. Unwary man ! The Pope's nephews surpassed him in cunning, as much as he surpassed them in genius.

Farinaccio, thanking him with all his heart, went to find the advocates De Angelis and Altieri, to persuade them to compose with him the board of defence ; and after some difficulty induced them to be his colleagues in this case, which was attracting not only the eyes of Rome, but of all Italy. Nor was Farinaccio without very powerful reasons in choosing them ; for these lawyers, beside possessing great experience in criminal cases (as they have left

to us their posterity, certain books although fewer in number, but equal in merit to those of Farinaccio) De Angelis, as advocate of the poor, enjoyed a great reputation among the people ; and Altieri, as a person of higher rank, was very acceptable to the Roman Nobles.

In their united conferences Farinaccio explained his design ; it appeared to them, as it really was, one full of danger ; but he with his eloquence, and many reasons, persuaded them that the case offered no better way ; that they should treat it as surgeons do hopeless cases. The lawyers understanding the gravity of the affair, almost repented of the charge they had assumed ; and, if they could have done it honorably, would have retracted their word, when Farinaccio lightly reproached them, saying, " that heaven belonged to eagles and earth to snails, and had it been a common case he should not have had recourse to them, the pride and light of the Roman bar."

This was such open and excessive flattery, that it should not have deceived men so skilled in the usages of the world. Yet it was not so ; for they drank it all in, and were now entirely disposed to aid their colleague with all their power ; we have always observed that men, fishes, and birds, from Adam downward, have always been caught in the same nets, and they never notice it, and perhaps never will.

Farinaccio ended all this business when it was late at night, and for that day he had worked enough : another would have gone to recruit his strength by sleep ; but he went to join his bad companions, who received him with open arms, and the thought of the Cencis was drowned in gambling and noise.

But hardly had Farinaccio opened his eyes on the following morning, than he found this thought upon his pillow, and throwing aside all other business, gave his whole attention exclusively to the Cencis' case. Dressing in haste, he went to the prison of Corte Savella at the moment when they were opening the doors.

Farinaccio being well known in these places, it is needless to say met with smiling faces ; for either as prisoner or visitor, he had long since tamed the Cerberuses of such hells, and kept them continually friendly to himself. He was furnished however with a permisson from Monsignor Taverna, governor of Rome, which he showed to the superintendent, who declined reading it (after having eyed it stealthily, and well recognized it) alleging he had too much respect for the eminent advocate, to require any other proof, than his honorable word. The notaries showed him the process, which he learned quickly ; first because it treated of the usual things which he had studied all his life ; and second, because at that time, more than now, trials, both criminal and civil, strongly resembled oysters taken during a new moon ; from which you are fortunate if, after throwing away the shells, there be enough left to moisten your lips. After finishing this business, he asked leave to confer with the prisoners Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci, and Lucrezia Petroni, which was immediately granted.

Beatrice in her solitary prison, lying in bed, had not a limb which did not pain her keenly, and yet her mind was more troubled with the sorrows of her heart. She was thinking of her lover. Certainly the bolt of destiny had struck them and torn them asunder like a rock ; the sea gurgles whirling and foaming between that riven cliff whose summits are to unite no more ; yet, standing opposite each other, they recall the mutual calamity, and testify that nature created them one. Her life now wanted an aim ; existence to her was now useless : whether she died or lived, Guido could not even stretch out his hand to save her from falling into an abyss,—how then could he become her husband ;—nevertheless if it so pleased God, so be it. The martyrdom, which she most innocent girl was suffering, gave her a proof that Divine mercy wished to save her, for all her sins might thus be atoned ; and, if not too presumptuous, she thought them more than enough : but must she even suffer more for the safety



of her soul, she would not grieve : for one torture more or less, it mattered not, they had accustomed her to tortures ! Pain had become attached to her like another skin ! “ Let us talk no more of this life ;—a smoke which has caused tears, and has passed away ; let us speak no more of it : I already feel like the tenant of a tomb. But Guido !—Will God pardon him ? Why should he not ? Whomsoever truly repents, him the Lord will always pardon. But will he repent ? never, for in a like case he would do it again :—else he would not have loved me ; and I in his place would have done, and would do as he did. Alas ! alas ! Save him, oh Lord : let me, after so much suffering upon this earth, see him again in Heaven, embrace, and touch his hand. His hand ? Yes, for God will erase from my memory the blood that once stained it—yet these doubts make my soul tremble, and prove the bitterness of a second death. Oh ! would that I could have a holy man to teach me ! If God in his mercy would send one to me, he would bring greater consolation to my weary soul, than the pain which Luciani’s torture gave to my body.”

“ Lady Beatrice :” said Virginia, entering into the prison, “ the lawyer, Prospero Farinaccio, wishes to speak with you.”

“ With me ? What business can I have with the lawyer ? I know him not. Well ! admit him, so many have come that he can also.”

Farinaccio advanced a few steps within the room, and then stopped, astonished. Although he had heard wonderful stories of Beatrice’s beauty, now it seemed to him the reality was far more than the report. Her divine face, sad in consequence of the pains she suffered, her pure beauty in this hour of anguish made her seem like one of those angels, who assisted our Redeemer in his hours of passion. The lawyer’s boldness failed, and an unusual hesitation took possession of him ; so that silently and affected by an ineffable feeling of reverence, he approached the bed of Beatrice.



"What do you wish?" she said with gentle voice, as she saw that Farinaccio had lost his power of speech; he then hesitatingly answered:

"I come, gentle maiden, urged by your misfortunes, and still more by the prayers of one, who weeps most bitter tears,—one whom you perhaps hate, and love at the same time—one, who was never so worthy of being yours as at that moment when he lost you forever. Your heart may have already told you with its beatings—I see it has told you who he is that sent me."

"He?—And does he weep?"

"He does, and says to you that he shall die of despair if you do not try to save yourself. In order that you may put absolute and entire confidence in me—he has requested me to give you this ring.

Beatrice took the ring, and looking at it said:

"Has he told you all?"

"All."

"Really everything?" and as Farinaccio assented with his head, she continued: "Then what do you think of it, sir? do you not think my marriage resembles that of the Doge of Venice, when throwing a ring into the sea, he marries the abyss."

Farinaccio did not answer; then having recovered from his emotion, he begged Beatrice to listen to him attentively, for the matter was of great importance. He then told her what we already know, spoke of the state of the trial, and finally concluded with:

"Now for the sake of your relatives and yourself, after the mature deliberation which the case requires, I see no other way of safety than this; that you freely confess your father fell killed by your own hand."

Beatrice interrupted him with a cry of surprise; and gazed at him bewildered. If this was jesting, the time, the place and her condition rendered it too cruel;—if advice, it seemed so

monstrously strange, that she really thought the lawyer or herself had lost their senses. Farinaccio seeing her astonishment added :

“ I fully understand that my advice must seem very singular to you, still I am ready to enlighten you upon all your doubts.”

“ Is it possible,” said Beatrice, “ that after I have suffered so many tortures to save my good name, I should myself defame it, leaving it as a byword of horror to posterity, while I wished to leave it one of compassion and sorrow ?”

“ Let me say to you, gentle girl, an incredible, but a true thing. Everybody believes you did kill him, who cannot be called your father without outraging nature ; some believe so for a particular reason of their own, and in my opinion it consists less in hatred towards your person, than in the greedy desire of your property : others believe it because they love you, and it pleases their imagination to look upon you as a wonderful being, and hail you as more virtuous than Lucretia, more strong than Virginia. The people have placed you as first in this trinity of courageous Roman women, and worship their invention : should any one endeavor to undeceive them now, they would not only disbelieve him, but they would detest him ; perhaps in a moment of passion, they might kill him, as one who wished to deprive them of a patrimony of glory. The love of the people is like the love of Jupiter, which by too much ardor reduced Semele to ashes. If I should take my course of defence upon this presumption, I should at the same time lose myself, and not save you. Meanwhile, you by denying it will not succeed in persuading any one that you did not murder your father, neither would you save your own life nor his, who through loving so much lost you ; for the judges consider the proofs gathered in the process sufficient for your condemnation as a parricide, and the laws of our tribunals grant the power, taking into consideration the confession of the

accomplices, of subjecting the refractory to the trial by torture until death ensues."

"Amen : and it seems to me they have reduced me to such a condition that the path now left for me to tread is a very short one. After all, it is not so painful to die, as men generally think : I can assure you of the truth of it ; I, to whom it has more than once been granted to touch the gates of eternity."

"No, dear lady, you must not die, and although among the Gentiles your resolution might appear magnanimous, among Christians it is sinful ; since God is equally offended with him who does not strive to save his life, as with him who lays violent hands upon himself."

"Shall I then consent to live, and see fathers shudder at my approach ? shall I live to see people, curious and frightened, fix their eyes upon my face as if to read there the word ' parricide.' Ah ! no.—May it please God to let me disappear from this earth, and blot out even my memory !"

"But do you suppose that from the belief of your having murdered your father, you have derived hatred or horror ? if you believe so, you are deceived. As long as men have hearts to beat at the name of virtue, will they despise, instead of exalting the name of the noble girl, who becoming a heroine for her virtue, defended it with an act piously cruel ? the stronger the tie, so much more the offence, and it gave you a legitimate right to resist. Recall ancient and modern history to your memory, and see whether children were thought infamous and depraved who for a just revenge killed their parents. Take Orestes as an example ; although the offence that he avenged was different from yours, nor were the circumstances the same, for he killed his mother long after the assassination of Agamemnon, nor did he do it to save himself from imminent danger, from which he could have been saved in no other way ; yet ancient wisdom imagined that Minerva herself descended from heaven and invisibly threw

a vote into the urn, which, cutting short the doubtful wavering of the judges, proclaimed him innocent."

"But tell me, Sir, would you, after the judgment of Minerva, have given your daughter in marriage to Orestes?—Speak to me conscientiously—would you like to have your son marry with a parricide?"

"My answer cannot satisfy this question, for in your case it is different ; and soon, I hope, it will be as clear to others as to me. Justice is not a fruit of all seasons ; it should be, but is not ; neither is truth ; both need to bloom and mature, and he who plucks them when unripe, injures them and himself. At the proper time, the astonished people shall know how a girl of sixteen, after having suffered tortures which no patience or human strength is able to endure, did not at last hesitate to compromise her life and fame, out of love to her family. I cannot find a person who ever made so solemn a sacrifice, and derived from it, not only praise, but affectionate veneration, except one only, and he was God, not a man."

Thus speaking, he took from the head of the bed a small crucifix, and placing it upon the counterpane, said :

"He, with his silence, teaches you what sacrifice is, more than my words can ; He, for the redemption of those who had offended Him, who then offended Him, and would do so still, accepted the unmerited execution ; He gave to Eternal Justice an eternal ransom with His precious blood ; an everlasting baptism falling upon our heads like a deluge of mercy which never has an end."

"Yes ; but Christ did not die infamous."

"Who was more vilified than He ? Who more overwhelmed with scorn and ignominy ? Who did they prefer to Him in the pardon which was accorded ? Barrabas, a robber ! They gave for His companions upon the cross, Cismos and Dismos, two thieves ! He had foretold this, as it says in the Gospel : ' You

will be reviled of all people for my name's sake ; but take my cross and follow me ; whosoever is ashamed of me is not worthy of me.' ”

“ Must I, then, take this God of truth as a witness to a falsehood ? ”

“ This is no objection ; in the first place, it is against nature to oblige the accused to swear, thus putting him to the necessity of feigning, or doing injury to himself. But putting this aside : how is it possible that Divine laws can allow us to take the life of another to defend our own, and not give us the right of defending it by affirming the false for a holy end. Is not homicide worse than perjury ? Certainly ; and were they even equal, if it is permitted to us, by universal consent, to defend one's own life by the first, why should it not be so with the second ? ”

“ Sir Advocate, you puzzle, but do not convince me ; my mind is not competent to confute yours ; still I feel—here, within my heart—that truth is not on your side.”

Hardly had she spoken these words, when her prison door opened again, and the sad faces of her mother and brothers appeared, who surrounded her bed. They did not speak, or even make a motion, and yet a prayer seemed to emanate from each one—a silent conjuration—a weeping of the heart, which ears cannot hear, but which fills the trembling soul. The lawyer's eloquence had been nearly exhausted ; more words would have injured instead of availed, and he was almost in despair of succeeding in his design. The silence was long, and Beatrice kept her eyes fixed upon the crucifix lying by her side. Suddenly she took it up, and kissing it fervently, with a mournful voice, as if chanting a psalm for the dead, said :

“ Since you wish it, let it be so. Oh, Lord, Thou seest and knowest these things ; if they are wicked, forgive them, for they are done with a good intention ; if good, reward them as they deserve. For my own part, I know there is no other hope for



the desperate than that of hoping nothing. The fate which pursues us will cease its persecutions upon the tombstone of our graves ; it will turn its steps elsewhere when it sees written upon them : ' Here lie all the Cencis, beheaded for their crimes.' However, I will not take from you the last ray of hope ; and as it is a great comfort to the dying to drink with their last look the flitting light, so it will not seem to me that I am a useless victim. If I could suffer the penalty for you all, and be accepted as an expiation, or appease the relentless fate which persecutes our family, I would do it ; not being able, behold, I sacrifice myself uselessly ; I wished to warn you of this, in pity for the grief which you will feel when you shall fall into the depths of despair."

The windows not being securely fastened, yielded just then to the wind, which blew furiously on that day, and opened ; and the light which was burning before the image of the Madonna was extinguished. Beatrice, at this incident, murmured in as sad a tone as before, two lines of Petrarch, suiting them to her own condition :

*" Siccome fiamma, che per forza è spenta,  
Se ne andò in pace l'anima contenta."*

Farinaccio, to banish the mournful presentiment, tried to speak words of hope, but they expired on his lips. The Cencis wept, and the lawyer's face was bathed in tears ; he covered his eyes with both hands, and leaning upon the bed, began to think if he could contrive any other plan less dangerous than the one he had devised to save these unfortunate people, and not finding any, groaned. Other cases pressing upon him, he took leave of them with a silent salutation ; and his mind, bold when he entered the prison, trembled now, discouraged as it had never been before.

" Now," said Luciani, with a scornful voice, " what have you been able to obtain from that strong-willed girl ?"



"She confesses," replied Farinaccio, oppressed, "she confesses that to defend herself she was forced to kill Count Cenci."

"Indeed?—By Jove! You work miracles, my dear Sir Advocate. If you remain at the bar, I will burn all the instruments of torture both ordinary and extraordinary."

Farinaccio, displeased at the joy of this cruel man, replied in a reproachful tone :

"Sir, remember that the Greeks (and they were Pagans) when they gained a victory over the Greeks, instead of exulting, ordered public expiation."

"Oh! You are a very literary man, walking in the lofty paths of learning; I, who walk through the lower ones, know that the peasant gives eggs to the hunter who has killed the fox. I was right there? Eh! there is no nonsense with me; and that little *Ave Maria* face has not deceived me at all. *Cara de angel, corazon de demonio*, as the Spaniards say."

And Farinaccio, in the power of an enthusiasm so much the more fervent in him as it was rare, took Luciani by the arm, and dragging him to the balcony, pointed to the sun shining in the fullness of its rays, saying :

"If you could take away those rays, and make a crown of them, it would not be worthy of the virtue of this divine girl."

Luciani not looking at the sun but at the face of Farinaccio, shook his head, and replied very gravely :

"My dear sir, I look upon this wretch with very different eyes than yours; and for two reasons, one better than the other: the first one is this," (and taking off his hat he showed him his white hair,) "the second is this," (and unbuttoning his coat, showed an amulet against witches, hanging about his neck.)

Farinaccio disgusted, saw that he was throwing pearls before swine, and cut short the conversation, recommending him to receive the girl's confession as she would give it, and went away.

Luciani, after having in vain attempted to make Beatrice

appear before his tribunal, proceeded in company with his colleagues and notaries to her prison, and received her confession ; in which she, exculpating in every particular her mother and brothers, took all the crime upon herself, declaring there was nothing premeditated in it, but all happened from a sudden passion of her soul, moved by the horror of her father's attempt ; and substituting herself for Guido Guerra, gave the particulars of the case pretty much the same as they really happened. To Luciani's question concerning the means by which she procured the dagger, she hesitated, somewhat embarrassed ; then replied : " she had for a long time been accustomed to carry it about her person, with the intention of killing herself before suffering violence ;" but to Luciani's cross-questioning she contradicted herself, and it was natural ; for if he had been eager in seeking for the truth which he hated, as he was satisfied with the false which pleased him, Beatrice would not have been able to sustain the story which had been suggested to her. This not being the aim of Luciani, he swallowed all, and thought it useless to seek further, since what he had obtained was in his opinion sufficient to condemn the whole family. In the hope of seeing all the Cencis executed, Luciani forgot, or at least made a truce with the hatred he bore the Cardinal of St. George ; and, taking the papers of the process, went to the Cardinal's palace, like a wild beast carrying his prey into his den to share it with his family. Entering the room, he did not wait to be questioned, but exclaimed, panting :

" We have—we have got at last this desired confession !"

Cardinal Cinzio, looking at the dogged face of Luciani, involuntarily thought of the wild cannibals which had lately been sent to him from America, and started back two or three steps. Being however a man of good judgment, after reading all the particulars of the process, he immediately saw the untruthfulness of the depositions, and the contradiction of the circumstances : he

also entertained a doubt whether the lawyer pleaders could not destroy this ill-constructed edifice, like the witches' kettle which, when broken, disperses all enchantments. But Luciani solved every doubt, "particular circumstances," said he "were not to be considered ; only one thing was to be retained, and this was the confession of the accused of having taken part in the crime, either consenting to it, or committing it ; that it would be impossible for all the contradictions and lies to agree, which the guilty, in endeavoring to escape the just vengeance of the law, are accustomed to invent ; there was no necessity of being too particular in these cases ; and when the crime was so evident as this was, and confessed by all, there could be no need of a process, much less of a defence, as Sixtus V., of glorious memory, had taught when in the case of the Spaniard, he said :—' Why do you talk about trial ? Trials are superfluous in such cases, and there is less need of a defence ; nevertheless talk as much as you please, provided the felon be hung before dinner ; and hasten, for we are hungry, and will dine early to day.' This is what I call justice ! These are golden words ! I should like to know whether Pope Clement cannot do what Pope Sixtus did so easily, and I should like to know who would dare to dispute his right of doing so ? Have the keys of the Church become rusty since Sixtus' time ? Or have the hands into which Providence entrusted them become weaker ? No, thank God ; and as it is not so, no one should think so ; and the fact must show itself immediately, to those who might perchance believe so."

Cardinal Cinzio had no need of a spur, and as the evil loquacity of Luciani flattered his passion, it seemed to him that the new Chief Justice had never before spoken with so much wisdom and eloquence.

These doings were not kept so secret but that the rumor of them ran through Rome very swiftly ; and the people were wonderfully excited about it, and in the squares, by the crossings of

the streets and corners there was anxious questioning among those who met. Every little while people would come out of their shops to learn more news, women stood in the balconies, eager to obtain the lightest whispering ; I believe the Hebrews, who stood upon Mount Sinai waiting eagerly for the voice of God, showed no more anxiety than did these Romans with their minds turned towards the Vatican in expectation of the word, which was to decide the destiny of the Cencis ; and this word was heard in the midst of darkness preceded by lightning, a sign of blood.

“THEY SHALL ALL BE TIED TO THE TAILS OF WILD HORSES ; DRAGGED THROUGH THE STREETS UNTIL DEAD ; AND THEIR BODIES THEN THROWN INTO THE TIBER.

Thus had the Vicar of Christ the Redeemer spoken. A shudder ran through the veins of the Romans. They seemed to hear the tolling of the bell which knelled the funeral of Rome. Many refused to believe such unheard-of cruelty : others, and they were those best acquainted with the court and the pitiless cupidity which governed it, considered the Pope capable of this cruelty, and of more besides. This news reached Farinaccio's ears, and shudderingly he held the opinion of the latter ; he ran quickly to confer with the Cardinal Protectors, and with others of the sacred college, who although they took but an indifferent part in this affair, were easily persuaded that the command of the Pope was an atrocious barbarity, and such as to put to shame the most barbarous acts which that cruel monk, Sixtus V. had ever dared to commit. For, though only nine years had passed since the death of this pontiff, the times had become somewhat civilized, nor were the ecclesiastics themselves satisfied of his having procured that good for the church, which some pretended.

Therefore the wise cardinals, to whom the decency of the Apostolic Seat was dear, went to the Vatican to try and divert

the Pope from so imprudent a step, Farinaccio, who felt he had been deceived, went to find Cardinal Cinzio ; and when the servants told him he had gone to visit the Spanish ambassador, threw himself upon a bench in the ante-room, saying :

“ I will wait.” From his expression, he seemed determined to stay there all night without moving. But in a short time, overcome by his emotions, he began to walk to and fro, gesticulating and murmuring. Often he would look at the door, but more often wiped the perspiration, which streamed from his face by the horror and pain of the unexpected announcement.

Perhaps he had returned, perhaps the cardinal had never gone out, for I know that with servants in general, and it is said with those of the Roman prelates in particular, falsehood is a rule, and truth an exception ; the fact is, that after a convenient space of time, sufficiently long to make it appear probable the cardinal had returned, they told Farinaccio he could see him. He did not wait for the summons to be repeated ; and hastening in an excited state found His Eminence seated and as tranquil in appearance as if about to receive a strange visitor. He was obliged however to throw off his feigned impassibility, for Farinaccio, trembling with emotion, went boldly to him, and casting aside all respect, exclaimed :

“ Is this priestly faith, Your Eminence ?”

The cardinal, arguing from the preface what the discourse might be, cut short his words with a dignified but excited voice, saying :

“ Sir Advocate, I could say that my promise of the defence was made *sub modo* ; that is, provided the confession of the accused was not so clear and explicit as to render any defence useless : I could also say that I honor (and I am not the only one, but others superior to myself profess the same opinion) those lofty intellects, who, as lights sent from God to illumine us in the darkness of our doubts and errors, come to lead us in the path



of rectitude ; but on the other hand I and my superiors greatly despise those advocates who, abusing their intellects, which certainly were never given them for such a use, torture with their sophisms what is right, rendering entangled, by cavilling, that which is plain, and disturbing the clear waters that they may fish in them."

"Do the proofs of the crime appear plain to you? How long since that part of a complicated confession which declares the guilt, must be accepted, and the other, which justifies it, rejected? These are snares . . . ."

"I have nothing to say about that ; I will only declare what your own good judgment might have suggested to you. My promise was given, and it could not have been otherwise, upon the condition that the Pope should consent ; and this condition, you know very well, in an inferior, whose will is subject to others, although not expressed must always be virtually understood. Now if the Supreme Pontiff, the fountain of all wisdom, your master and mine, found it well not to approve of my doing, with what justice you can complain of it I leave to your wise understanding to consider."

"I was born in Rome, educated at the Roman bar, and you ought to understand, most Eminent Sir, that all these subterfuges are perfectly useless with me—I know them. You promised ; if you had not the power to keep it, you should not have exposed yourself. But no ; you promised, and ought, and can keep that promise. Does not the whole world know that you are the mind of the pontifical thoughts, that your august uncle prefers you to Cardinal Aldobrandino, and that he never refuses anything to his beloved nephew? I obtained the confession on condition of the defence, trusting to certain arguments, which I now know by proof how unfortunate they were? Grant, I beg of you, a defence to the accused ; otherwise do you know what will be said in Rome? That the innocent were betrayed, and



that in the capital of the Catholic world, Judas found a companion."

"Sir Farinaccio, you . . . ?"

"I am that one."

"Your mind is unusually excited—calm yourself—this excitement may be injurious to you—calm yourself."

Farinaccio was in no state to listen to this advice, nor to the hidden menace concealed in these words ; or if he did, it was like a spur to an unruly horse ; and boiling with indignation, with a burning face, he said :

"How can I be calm ? The times in which we live, and the universal corruption have dragged me into the path of ungovernable pleasures, which I have run through without shame, it is true, but at least without depravity ; within my breast I keep a secret place where the voice of God could sometimes be heard, and which commands me to proclaim to you Lady Petroni and all the Cencis innocent—Lady Beatrice, most innocent, confessed at my request, through the prayers of her relatives, and by the virtue of that same love which induced Christ to sacrifice himself for the human race. Notwithstanding the confession of the murder of that wretch, whom nature herself is ashamed to call father, I trust no Christian judge would ever condemn the maid who courageously defended her virtue. Should I not obtain this I—yes, I—shall have placed her head upon the block ; if I do not succeed, your Eminence, my garments, my hands, will be indelibly stained with innocent blood ; there will be no more quiet or peace for me ; nor could I even shed tears enough to clear myself of the remorse—and I swear to you upon the Gospel, that in expiation of my involuntary crime, I will dress in sackcloth like a pilgrim, and from Estremadura to Palestine, from Jerusalem to Loretto, I will not leave a city, town, or village behind me, where I shall not have preached the innocence of the Cenci family, and the deplorable error of which they were the victims."

"Pray, be calm, Sir Farinaccio. You lay too much stress on this affair, allow me to say so. You cannot be ignorant of the great esteem in which you are held at court, and how agreeable it would be to please you, if possible. I can secretly trust you with this, that his Holiness has not yet sent an order for the execution of the sentence to the Governor of Rome. In the meantime, I will endeavour to speak with him, and humbly beg him to allow the defence to take place, telling him that I had engaged my word in the fulfillment of it. Go, and be assured not a leaf will be moved without your knowing it. Now, as a friend, let me advise you, that it having been a long time decided at court to promote you to some conspicuous office, and avail ourselves of your great legal talents for the benefit of the State, that you do not break the design with your own hands, destroying your way to ascend—and at the same time with imprudent actions and words, recalling to mind certain affairs already half forgotten, and thus build with your own hands the precipice from which you may fall. I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you again."

And they separated.

The Cardinal's words gave some uneasiness to Farinaccio ; but he shook it from him like flakes of snow upon his hair ; and proceeding indefatigably in his assumed charge, he met his colleagues and warned them of the threatened treachery, inciting them to present themselves before the Pope in order to make their reasons prevail. Indeed he was not obliged to expend many words to make them undertake it ; for in the many composing a board we always see *l'esprit du corps* prevail ; the lawyers Altieri and De Angelis, although of a mild nature, were very partial to what was just—not able perhaps to bear martyrdom, yet they would not desert the cause of right without strong protestation. They agreed to go to the Vatican ; and since a rumor had spread that the Pope refused to allow any one who

came for the Cencis to be admitted to his presence, they concluded that De Angelis alone should present himself, as the advocate of the poor, hoping the Pontiff, ignorant of the part he had assumed in the defence of the Cencis, would receive him ; and then, watching their opportunity, his colleagues would follow him, and all kneeling at the feet of his Holiness, endeavor by all the arguments which the occasion might present, to make him confirm the grant of the defence, already promised by his nephew, the Cardinal of St. George.

They did as they had planned. Going towards the Vatican, they saw the carriages of the principal prelates and Roman barons returning, and observed some appeared dejected, while others gesticulated with excited looks and words. It was a bad omen. Made more cautious by necessity, they determined to present themselves separately in the antechamber, and mix with the crowd of those who were waiting for an audience ; thus removing the suspicion that they had come on the same business. The plan succeeded—De Angelis obtained leave to present himself ; and the door being opened by the chamberlain, before he had time to prevent it, Altieri and Farinaccio followed, and all together knelt before the Pontiff, who, scowling, asked, in an angry voice :

“ What is this ? What do you want of me, gentlemen ? ”

“ Your Holiness,” replied De Angelis, raising his hands, “ we will not rise from your most holy feet if the permission is not granted, already promised by the most Eminent Cardinal St. George, of defending the cause of the unhappy Cencis.”

Clement VIII. thus urged against his will, dissimulating the rage which boiled in his bosom, said in a low voice :

“ Am I destined then by Providence to see that Rome, not only produces wretches who kill their own father, but lawyers also who do not refrain from defending parricides ? ”

De Angelis astonished, let his arms fall, not daring to open his mouth.

Altieri, to whom the Pope's words appeared strange, was about to give a suitable answer ; when Farinaccio prevented him by boldly and frankly saying :

" Most Blessed Father, it is new to hear one who was the pride and light of the Roman bar stigmatize the counsel for the defence as champions of the crime. We did not come here to defend parricides, but to beg the fulfillment of a promise, which is sacred ; we trust by means of the defence to show that some of the accused are innocent, others excusable ; but all deserving of the mercy of Your Holiness. You believe them guilty, most Blessed Father, and we bow down to your conviction ; we hold them innocent, and beg, as a right, our belief may be respected ; the voice of conscience comes from God, and in the scales of Eternal Justice the consciences of all men weigh equally."

Farinaccio pronounced these words in a solemn manner ; and, although on his knees, his soul seemed to be seated in the chair of Christ's Apostle, while the Pope's seemed humbled to the earth. He was surprised ; and not able to find an answer immediately, to gain time, said :

" Rise !" Then, looking suspiciously at Farinaccio, asked :  
" Are you the advocate Prospero Farinaccio ?"

" I am ; and a most unworthy son and subject of your Holiness."

" So His Eminence, Cardinal St. George, promised you the defence of the Cenci ?"

" Yes, to me, most Blessed Father."

" Cardinal St. George shall keep what he promised. Go in peace."

The voice of the Pontiff by being low did not sound less threatening, as thunder, although distant, foretells the coming storm.

Altieri, fearful of having injured himself in the Pope's estimation, hardly had his colleagues passed the threshold of the door, than returning, he threw himself again before the Pope, saying :

"Most Blessed Father, deign to consider that I, being inscribed in the board of the advocates for the poor, cannot deny the office of defence to whomsoever asks it of me."

The Pope, a cunning simulator and dissimulator, having entirely recovered his impassibility, replied mildly and softly :

"We do not wonder at you, but at the others :—but in thinking it over, I feel that they also are deserving men, and zealous in their noble office."

When Altieri rejoined his colleagues he found them in close conversation with Cardinal St. George, whom they had met, and had approached without any ceremony, telling him that they were just returning from a conversation with His Holiness ; and were convinced, by indubitable proofs, of his good intentions ; it being his wish that, since His Eminence had given his word, he should keep it. Would he then be pleased to go, and fulfill it ; they would wait in the ante-room the termination of the colloquy.

"Do you not think you sin by over confidence ?" observed the cardinal to Farinaccio, smiling.

"*More Romano*, your Eminence, *more Romano*. Our forefathers derived the word *pegno*, pledge, from *pugno*, fist, not reputing themselves safe unless they had the pledge in their hands ; and did not even trust to summons, but dragged the witness by the ear to judgment."

The cardinal, with bitter countenance and body bent, entered the room of the Pope. He remained there as long as he thought proper, and then came out feigning great joy for having, by his humble supplications, obtained from the Pontiff the power of keeping his promise, and the reprieve of twenty-five days, in order that the Advocates might have time to prepare their defence.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE JUDGMENT.

*As a roaring lion, and a raging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.*  
*Proverbs, xxviii. 15.*

Aperta è la gran sala ove le sorti  
Fur decise del re, quando ancor Roma  
Fu astuta, se non forte.  
*ARROSSI, Beatrice Concl.*

THIS is the hall that displays the paintings of Raphael, and listens to the consultations of the Priests:—This is the hall where were discussed, and sometimes even decided, the destinies of the kings of the earth; since power, before being itself extinguished, consigned its torch to cunning, who hastened to set the four corners of the earth in a blaze.

When nations had plucked one by one the feathers of the great eagle which eclipsed the sun of liberty, hoping to warm themselves in its rays, lo! other shadows were placed between man and liberty, and they were made by the Keys of St. Peter—the Hebrew fisherman—but power and cunning can both be consumed; and if the hilt of the Roman sword could not fix the nail in the wheel of fortune, much less could the pastoral crook of the priest. Revenge subdues force secretly, but inevitably, like a vein of subterranean water. Behind a trunk of a tree, behind the altar of a god, everywhere and always it holds its bow stretched, and sooner or later it will shoot the arrow into the



tendon of Achilles ; but cunning wears itself out by its own malice, as the hour glass empties itself by letting fall the grains of sand which measure time.

The Pope was seated high above all, under a canopy of crimson velvet trimmed with golden fringe. A step lower, sat four Cardinals upon stools : on one side Cinzio Passero, Cardinal of St. George, his nephew by his sister Giulia, and Francesco Sforza, Cardinal of St. Gregory of Velatro ; on the other, Pietro Aldobrandino, Cardinal of St. Nicholas, nephew by his brother Peter, and Cesare Baronio Cardinal of the saints Nereo and Achilleo, wrapped in their magnificent purple robes : then in a larger circle, upon splendid seats, Cardinals, Bishops and Prelates of all ranks, conspicuous in their purple and vermilion robes.

In the middle, on the right of the throne, was a bench covered with black cloth, where sat the judges of the palace and of the sacred criminal Rota, presided over by a special Chief Justice, Luciani being ill : on the opposite side was another bench for the attorney of the government, and several chancellors and notaries : across these a third for the Advocates of the defence.

The German soldiers with iron helmet and cuirass, the halbert over their shoulders, guarded the hall, and pushed back the curious ; ancient pride and humiliation at the same time of our Italian Princes, who are obliged to call from the North those wild beasts with human faces to exercise brutal force.

Every one was seated in his proper place. Silence having been enforced as usual by the ushers, the Chief Justice having first asked leave from the Supreme Pontiff, gave a sign with his hand to the Government Attorney, that he might begin.

He arose. Whilst he wipes his face with his white cambric handkerchief, arranges his hair, and is guilty of other similar affectations, let us stop awhile to look at him.

His complexion was like the ancient images of Christ in ivory. His eyes dull and lifeless like those of a dead fish : his straight

hair hung down on one side of his face like a willow tree, weeping over his heart and brains long since dead : he moved his arms like a windmill : now he would shrink with his body and then leap up, like a snake springing from a box. To see him one would have said that at his birth petulance, presumption and stupidity danced about his cradle, and made him presents, which he afterwards increased by adding hypocrisy himself.

The Attorney, with great solemnity drew up the sleeves of his gown, and then in a low voice, which by degrees grew louder, affirmed that he had used all diligence in the examination of the process, and had invoked the aid of Him, who never denies it to one who prays for it with all his heart ; he then narrated how, urged by the persuasions of the devil and by an abominable avarice, certain persons neither enemies nor strangers, but relatives, wife and children, had planned the murder of Count Francesco Cenci, a man famous for his piety, illustrious for his lineage, and renowned for his learning : he told of the commission given to the assassins Olimpio and Marzio ; of the treacherous sleep, of the postponed parricide on account of the festivity of the Blessed Virgin : he depicted the horror of the assassins, the savage threats of the girl to conquer their repugnance ; the nail driven repeatedly in ; the corpse dragged by the hair along the floor, and then with barbarous cruelty thrown from the balcony : he spoke of the proof, which thanks to the salutary torture, appeared most clearly from the unanimous confession of the criminals : it was already spread over the world, horror struck at hearing that in Rome, in the great seat of the most holy religion, near the throne of the best among the Vicars of Christ, such enormities were committed. What more ?—the corrupt age allowing such extravagant comparisons, he narrated that the sun itself became darkened through fear and horror (while on the contrary it had never appeared so clear as on that day :)—and how the waters of the Tiber, horror stricken, had flowed back

to their source (although in the sight of all the Romans they had continued to run tranquilly as far as Ostia :) finally, apostrophising the crucifix hanging from the wall, he called upon the Judges to remember His divine precepts, when he commanded, that the tree incapable of bearing good fruit should be cut down, and burnt : this was not a question of good fruits but of most corrupt and wicked ones. "It is intended," he added, "to excite your sympathy, Gentlemen of the holy Rota, by asking you to consider the youth of some of the parties, as if this, instead of diminishing the crime, did not furnish a plausible foundation for proceeding with greater severity. If the accused had not as yet reached the age of puberty, or had just attained it, it showed that, if capable of such abominations now, what might be expected of them when they shall have become adults ? We may run the risk of saying that the family of Atreus would seem a convent of friars compared to them !" He concluded finally with a certain hypothesis elaborately arranged, in which he described the soul of the illustrious Lord Count Cenci sent by violence out of this world, without the comfort of the sacrament and condemned, perchance, to eternal fire, standing upon the threshold of hell, shaking his white hair drenched with blood, and, raising his hands towards the judges, crying desperately : "Revenge ! Revenge !"

The first of the advocates to plead was Altieri, for Lady Lucrezia Petroni, who with mild gravity thus began : "he congratulated himself and his office greatly, for not being obliged to frighten the judges with images drawn from hell : it was his duty rather to beg them to look upon a pious and mild matron, and to raise a cry, not of revenge, every where disapproved before an assembly of Christians, but more abominable before the Vicar of Christ the Redeemer, and such pious judges ; but a cry, which alone can be worthily raised in tribunals, and it is that of "Justice ! Justice !"

Reviewing, then, the causes which might have led to the crime, he proved "how none of those mentioned by the attorney were applicable to Lucrezia Petroni. Not the desire of gain, since she had nothing to hope from the death of her husband, Count Cenci ; for the wife would only inherit her husband's property when dying intestate, with the exception of the entail; in this case, then, it was well known by all that Count Cenci had made a will, by which he disinherited every one of his relatives ; hence, had she conceived it to satisfy the impious desire of her avarice, the heir of the entail and her husband's will were contrary to it. Nor could she have been induced to it by spite, since she had borne many injuries and insults from her cruel husband, but not having resented them while young and handsome, when she must have felt the sting in proportion to the right, which she must have believed herself to possess of not submitting to them, it is not only unlikely but absurd that she should desire to avenge them after such a long space of time, when they had ceased, and when old age approaching, the blood runs more languidly in the veins, and the mind, even in passionate natures, assumes milder counsels ; especially to avenge them by means so atrocious, and at the same time dangerous. If the cruelties (I leave aside the offences to conjugal faith) had lasted, Lady Lucrezia, having recourse to the tribunals, could have obtained a separation from her husband, which, although not allowed by religion, so far as the tie is concerned, still is granted as far as dwelling apart ; nor was she wanting in help from powerful relations ; nor, being provided with a large dowry, would she have been obliged to remain with her husband for want of means of support. Much less ought it to be supposed that she yielded to the temptations of the devil, for, although we are all subject to be tempted by the evil one, yet our religion teaches that souls zealous of piety are either exempt from, or conquer them. Now, what woman ever showed herself more devout than Lady Lucre-

zia ? The attorney himself, although he uses it as an argument against her, gives her the credit of piety, when he asserts, that the murder of Count Cenci was postponed out of respect to the festivity of the Blessed Virgin ; but I desire the attorney to remember, that a woman possessing so much zeal for religion, will never offend not only against the day of the festivity, but the Mother of all mercies, the mediatrix of all pardons."

Continuing, he examined, act by act, the whole process ; endeavoring, with subtle industry, to show its irregularities, the contradictions of the depositions, the weakness of the proofs. Finally, he concluded by appealing to the conscience of the judges, not to consent "that a matron so universally esteemed, so beneficent to the poor, should be dragged by a path of infamy and shame to the tomb; now that her mortal breath was so near its end, they should not raise so great a blast to extinguish it. An instant—only an instant more, and grief and years will cover it with eternal darkness. Ah ! allow it to go out in peace."

De Angelis now opened his argument in favor of Don Giacomo, and he also endeavored to exclude the cause of the crime asserted by the attorney, and showed "that he could not have been instigated to it by actual want, since his father, by a just command of the Supreme Pontiff, paid him a decent allowance, and he, moreover, enjoyed the interest of his wife's dowry, which, with his own, was not so limited but to suffice for domestic expenses ; much less could he have been moved to commit the atrocious parricide in hopes of inheriting the entire patrimonial property, since it was well known Count Cenci himself openly boasted that he had disinherited him from all the free estates, which fact was well proved, and he could not have deprived him of the entails. Count Cenci was old, and had already reached that time of life when any slight cause might send him into the grave; therefore Giacomo Cenci must have been not only wicked, but insane, if, with so much depravity and danger, he could have



hastened that event, which shortly, with safety and without remorse, nature would have done for him. Now, how is it probable that this son could have shown himself so patient as to wait, when his father was in the vigor of his health, and entering into a green old age, and afterwards impatient of delay, when he had become decrepid and in ill-health? Don Giacomo, a stranger to intemperate pleasures, abhorring those vices which contaminate the world, a guiltless gentleman, a good husband, a good father, how could he all at once show such a ferocious disposition, which surpasses that of the most cruel of wild beasts? How is it possible that *he*, hardly born to crime, should become a monster in it, and with one single step run over the whole career, which the most wicked never reach but in their last steps? Nature does not consent to this; and all that which is opposed to the eternal laws of truth should either be entirely rejected, or at least admitted with difficulty. But here," the advocate continued with more vehemence, "I observe with bitterness in my soul, that a course entirely opposed to reason is followed. The more the circumstances of a crime are contrary to nature, so much more readily are they admitted; the more adverse to the rules of humanity and right, so much the more easily believed. This is not just. Don Giacomo (and the attorney did not speak of this as it deserved), when the crime was perpetrated was not at Rocca Petrella, but staying in Rome. Hence it is clear that he could not have participated with his presence in the murder. If, then, the attorney suspects that he shared in it by means of letters or messages, why does he not bring them forth? He does not even mention them. And certainly he must know that it is his duty to produce the *proofs*, to us belongs the *defence*. The foundation of the charge consists in the confession of the accused. I, for my own part, think that the confession of the accused should not weigh anything in the scales of justice, being unworthy of belief and contrary to nature. Indeed, with what



charity or wisdom can we oblige a man to confess? A man who does harm to himself was always considered as deprived of sound intellect, and if the Church allows Christian burial to the unfortunate being who has raised a violent hand against himself, it is because she believes he had lost his mind. Now, I ask, to accuse oneself of a capital crime, does it not have the same effect? Certainly it does; and the tongue may kill equally as well, and even better than the hand. However, here will be objected, we have not a spontaneous confession, but one extorted by means of the torture. Blessed God! An excellent answer, indeed! A day will come in which posterity shall wonder how we, their forefathers, were so stupid or so barbarous as to accept as an evidence of truth, that which by its own nature is a manifest sign of brutality and error."

A murmur of disapprobation spread throughout the hall, and Farinaccio pulling the gown of his companion, warned him, in a low tone, to touch lightly upon that subject. Cardinal Baronio, who was a very learned man for that time, leaning towards Cardinal Aldobrandini, who appeared to be highly displeased, whispered:

"These blessed lawyers, once started, come out with blunders enough to astonish Heaven and Earth!"

"And without the torture," replied the other, "I wish they would teach me how we are to find out the truth? What is the use of granting these talkers the liberty of thus boldly outraging the wisdom of great doctors? Continuing in this manner, I ask, your Eminence, what is to become of all authority? Why do not the judges impose silence upon him?"

"Your Eminence, let them speak as long as they let us act; when they shall presume to cut our wings, *on arisera*, as the French kings say when the Parliaments refuse to register their edicts."

The advocate De Angelis changed his subject, and like Altieri, began with sharp logic to demolish the ill-formed edifice of

the process, entangling himself into numberless observations, which wearied the minds of his listeners, and somewhat injured the efficacy of the argument. Finally he ended the defence, calling to mind the antiquity of the ancestry and nobility of the Cenci blood, and then, with better judgment, the desolate wife and children of Don Giacomo. "Let the judges proceed cautiously," he said, "very cautiously in impressing such a mark of infamy upon so noble a house ; they should remember that to the son of the parricide no maiden would ever give her hand ; to him no one would open his heart ; having become, without any fault of his, an object rather of dread than of pity upon this earth, it will not seem a crime, but right and a duty to cover him with shame ; no one would ask him to his table ; in the church they would shun him. What more ? they would scarcely share with him the light of the sun, or the earth which receives in her bosom all of us after death. And even to you, supreme and best Father of the universal faithful, grant that I may represent the misery of a wife, the mourning of children : in the hands which I supplicatingly raise to your most august throne, be pleased to see the hands of four children and a woman ; in my voice to hear the cries of five innocent beings, who, with tears and sobs, hope and expect mercy from you, after God."

"Here, your Eminence," said Cardinal Sforza to Cardinal Cinzio, "is your handkerchief, which I picked up from the floor ; you will need it to wipe your tears."

"I ?—I am not weeping."

"The plea of the Advocate De Angelis, however, seemed to me very conclusive ; the peroration a very happy one without doubt."

"Eh ! according to tastes, your Eminence. For my part, to compare it with the precepts of Aristoteles or Quintilian, it seems to me the poorest amplification from a student of rethoric, to say nothing of the juridical heresies which he has used, par-

ticularly the great one against confession obtained *per vim torturæ*. But silence ! Farinaccio is rising. Let us see how this racer will run ; the prize is four heads. What will you bet, that he will lose it ?”

“ When *you* say so, your Eminence, there is no need of betting ; how could I have a conviction different from yours ?”

Cardinal Cinzio looked suspiciously at Cardinal Sforza, but the latter an old adept of courts, showed a physiognomy as open as a miser’s box.

Farinaccio rose tossing his head ; and, throwing a look of inexpressible contempt upon the Government Attorney, with a loud voice, began :

“ May God assist me ! I know not, in beginning this oration, whether it is wonder or grief which oppresses me most ; both weigh upon me heavily ; for, before exercising the office of defense, I find myself obliged to call to mind the nature of the charge. The Government Attorney, if ancient doctrine has not failed to-day, as a defender of the law predetermined for the security of this civil fellowship, should proceed to his conclusions strictly, but without bitterness ; carefully, but without passion ; subtly, but without perfidy ; and whoever does otherwise, I say it boldly to his face, usurps the office of an executioner, and perhaps even worse. How can I have recognized a defender of the law in the magistrate raving like the Pythoness upon the tripod, overcome by the demon which agitated her ? It was not well done. How can I recognize him, when he draws from the facts consequences maliciously sophistical ? And this was even worse. How could I recognize him, when I heard him distort the facts, alter them, and as if this were not enough, imagine false, and assert others which were untrue ? which, in my opinion, was the worst of all. Do not move upon your seat, Mr. Attorney, for what I say I mean to prove.

“ You dared to describe Count Cenci as a model left by the

mercy of God upon the earth to bear witness of the golden age, and stripped the classics, both Greek and Latin, to gather gems for weaving a diadem of virtue, to place it upon the head of your hero? Oh, modesty! Francesco Cenci a religious man! He was certainly a procurer of holy images, but only to curse them; a builder and restorer of temples, but only to profane them; a preparer of tombs, but to bury in them, as he used daily impiously to beg of God, all his children before dying himself. Was Francesco Cenci pious? Certainly a very pious man he was, when he prepared a banquet on the day the news of the cruel death of his sons reached him; very pious, when appealing to God with his glass full of wine, he proclaimed that were it the blood of his sons, he would drink it with greater devotion than the wine of the holy Eucharist. These monstrosities are not imagined by me, but were known by everybody, and are attested by prelates and barons worthy of all honor, who were present at this horrible banquet. To whom was this man unknown! You all knew him, and knew what and how many crimes were charged to him. Perhaps some of you condemned him; for this pious man, as the Attorney says, received several condemnations, but had his penalty annulled by the Apostolic Chamber by paying very large sums of money. Come with me, your Honors, and let us ask how many volumes, the fruits of sleepless nights, has this man, *famous for his learning*, left to edify and teach posterity. Behold them, the book of his ephemerides, where he, I know not whether with more immodesty than iniquity, noted his crimes day after day. Nor were his bloody crimes, I speak of things known to all, the worst. He had all those ties which the human heart desires in this earthly pilgrimage for his comfort in life—he was a friend in order to become a traitor; he feigned himself a lover the better to seduce innocence, and to leave his victim in the power of Despair; he became a husband to commit adultery, a father to commit incest. He learnt the Roman

laws to disobey them ; and the divine ones to break them. Had it not been for Francesco Cenci, we might have believed that Suetonius had dipped his pen in calumny when he wrote the life and customs of Tiberius. It was reserved for Cenci to show to men that the cruelties of Caligula, of Nero, of Domitian, of Caracalla, and all other monsters, whom God in his wrath sent to scourge the earth, put all together, might be surpassed. Such was Francesco Cenci ; and if I have calumniated his memory, may his soul at this moment appear upon the threshold of this tribunal, and cry out to me ‘ thou liest ! ’ O wretched soul ! wherever thou art, listen to me. Leaving to others the care of reproaching you in the presence of God, I here, in the presence of his most Holy Vicar, proclaim thee the most perfidious and the most infamous of men that ever lived in the world ! ”

The Government Attorney, as if it was none of his business, was cleaning his nails ; not so Cardinal Sforza, who in a low tone of voice said to Cardinal St. George :

“ It seems that the racer has taken a good start.”

But the other did not listen to him, for in that moment he was concluding certain thoughts with the following formula. “ This man must be either for us or against us.”

Farinaccio continued :

“ Here we see a corpse, his throat cut with a deep wound. Who is he ? A father. Who has killed him ? His daughter ; she declares it without growing pale ; confesses it without any remorse ; nay she even acknowledges that, if she had not done it, she would do it. And who is this woman with such dreadful thoughts, and still more dreadful actions ? Behold her ! A girl whose face seems made by the hands of angels, in order that here below may be kept the type of celestial purity. Innocence might kiss her upon the mouth and say, ‘ hail sister ! ’ Mildness beams upon her face, and upon her smile. There is no one who does not praise her and laud her to the skies ; she has relieved



the grief of many, wept for the sorrows of all. What could have instigated this noble maiden to so execrable a deed? Ask the Attorney, and he will tell you, it was the devil. The devil, if he had seen her, would have mistaken her for an angel, and worshipped her; and we know the devil has no power over angels. Attorneys are not exempt from such a danger, because no one esteems them as angels, not even themselves! Let us then leave the devil alone, and reason upon more likely causes. Was it then the desire of money? At sixteen years of age a gentle maid thinks as much of money as a nightingale which fills the valleys with his melodies on a beautiful summer's night; or as much as the butterfly which sports its wings in the rays of a May sun. At sixteen years of age a girl is all love for the heavens and the earth; these two loves are confused within her, so that her first love for a terrestrial object has in itself something divine. But let us grant that she had a desire for money; how could this have led her to commit the abominable crime? The rich patrimony, which she inherited from her mother, her father could not have diminished, nor taken away; it would have been a foolish idea for her to trust in obtaining either all or a portion of her father's inheritance free of the entail, since Count Cenci, who had planned no other end than that of depriving his children of their property, their fame, and if he could, of their lives, would not have probably shown himself generous only towards her; and it would have been more than folly in Lady Beatrice to hope for the entail of the family" (and here he raised his voice more loudly than before) "since entailed property, by the universal consent of all legal authorities, cannot by any cause or pretext, not even by felony, high treason, or parricide of some of the heirs, be alienated from the legitimate successors from male to male."

The old Pontiff at these words bent his head down, and his eyes glistened under his bristled eye-brows like flames out of a



thorn bush : the Cardinal of St. George raised his head and looked at the Pope. The two looks seemed to say : " This man must be for us."

" Fortunate Olimpia !" continued the advocate ; " You were fortunate in having found an ear so kind as to listen to you, and did find the Father of the Faithful ready to withdraw you from the impious design of your father, by means of an honorable marriage. The heavens did not grant to Lady Beatrice a similar fortune ; her voice amid the rumor of troubled times, in the midst of the roar of arms, and the cries of triumph over reconquered Ferrara, was not heard. Of her memorial that she addressed from the depths of misery to the Vicar of Christ, no trace is left in the Chancellery, except the date of the day in which it was received, and the testimony of the officer who received it. In this manner that path, which was opened to others, would have been opened to her ; it was fated that the unfortunate girl should be abandoned by all, exposed, like a new Andromeda, upon the rock of necessity, to be devoured by monsters more cruel than that which Perseus conquered !

" I shudder to narrate the atrocities committed by Count Cenci against his daughter Beatrice. Ah ! Why did nature refuse me a heart and mind like those she granted to the Attorney, so that I might delight in exposing the shameful words with which the old man contaminated the chaste ears of Beatrice, and the impiety with which he strove to deprave her maiden mind ! nor did his flatteries, his immodesty, his blind passions, his fierce madness, the dark imprisonments, the long fastings, the affrighted sleep, the painful awaking, the blows, the wounds and the blood with which he attempted to subdue her, avail him. We see a corpse with its throat cut ; we shudder to look at it—it is an old man—it is a father killed by his own daughter ; no one denies it—she confesses it—oh ! a chill penetrates my very bones, and my teeth chatter with horror ; but courage !

let us dare to investigate what he was before he became a corpse. Opening stealthily, like a midnight robber, the door of the room where his desolate daughter groaned, his limbs wrapt in a robe, he approached the bed of the sleeping girl ; she sleeps and weeps because not even dreams are friendly to this unhappy maid. He, the sacrilegious man, first shrouding the lamp which the maiden kept burning before the image of the mother of purity, removed the covering and sees the body, which nature made sacred to the eyes of parents. Whoever is here that has a father's heart let him come with me and look at an impious old man, with his satyr's mouth, his burning eyes, before which the smoke of hell has passed, trembling, raving, extending his hands to touch the body of the maid, and——Beatrice feels the black cold skin of the reptile creep over her—she awakes—what will she do ?”

“What will she do ? Had she been as impious and degraded as her father, you then would have heard how the sun mentioned by the Attorney would have been eclipsed ; in a very different manner would his Tiber have retraced its currents towards its source. I, oh fathers, have painted before you this spectacle and not in vain. Answer me, say, at this moment how would you have desired Beatrice to act—impiously degraded as never a Roman maid was degraded, or be most miserable, as she now is ? Beatrice saw misfortune face to face, and she embraced it as a messenger from God—she drew her dagger and delivered her name from infamy. We, deploring this great necessity, must admire the courageous girl to whom in other times Rome would have voted triumphal honors, and instead, now has crushed her with torments, and threatens her with an ignominious death.”

“The great Emperor Adrian decreed, that should a son kill a father, or vice-versâ, by one of the fourteen causes contained in the law beginning : *Ut cum appellatione cognoscitur*, he should be exempt from the penalty of a parricide. It is true that the Em-

peror Adrian excluded the murder of the son committed by a father on account of the seduction of the step-mother or concubine, but by a common consent of the legal authorities the disposition of this law also extends to whatever other case of ingratitude, not that it should go entirely unpunished, but it should meet with less punishment than a capital one

“ Now, shall I be obliged to attempt to show you what, and how great a crime is incest against one’s own child? Can it be at all compared to the seduction of a step-mother or concubine? Can it be compared with other cases of ingratitude, as for example, should a son not redeem his father from slavery, or, if poor, should not aid him! I leave the eclipses, and the returning of rivers to their sources to the Attorney. But in proof of the enormity of this crime, let me recall to you what the divine Aristotle narrates, of an animal that having unconsciously committed an unnatural crime, overcome by shame, threw himself from a precipice, thus voluntarily freeing the world from so sad an object of hatred to the gods.

“ Even from the most remote periods of antiquity, in every era of social life among men, the unfortunate, rather than the guilty one, who to avoid incest killed his own parent, always went unpunished : thus we read of Semiramis killed by her own son Ninus, when she sought him for a criminal embrace ; of Ciane, who killed her father Cianno who had violated her ; of Medulina, who, violated by her father while in a state of intoxication, killed him without mercy ; and, for a reason less sinful than the above mentioned, Orestes, having killed his own mother, was by one half of the judges condemned, and absolved by the others, but Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, descended invisibly to place in the urn the absolving vote, by which the son of Agamemnon went unpunished. I quote this example not because it is to be believed as a literal fact ; but in order to show how this most

civilized people of Greece did not doubt that the supreme intelligence, which had issued adult and armed from the mind of Jupiter, agreed in proclaiming the son driven to kill his mother, in revenge of his father's murder, to be more worthy of pity than punishment.

“ The first law, in the final paragraph of the Digest *de sicariis*, expressly ordains ; ‘ Whoever kills on account of violence committed against himself or relatives, to be exempt from the rigor of the law ;’ and supposing a less criminal case, the law entitled *Isti quidem, quod metus causa* teaches us that from the fear of violence, as one which strikes us much more forcibly than the fear of death, we can by right free ourselves by killing him who threatens us, when there may be no better means of escape. Thank heaven, there is no want of numerous examples which account excusable those who kill the man who forcibly commits violence. It is read in Valerius Maximus that Caius Marins gave judgment infavor of Caius Plotius Mancipulanus for having killed his nephew Caius Lucius to prevent a violence ; and Virginius was declared innocent of the murder of his own daughter, because in this manner he freed her from the violence of Appius. Hence with greater reason, Beatrice Cenci, driven to it by a more extreme necessity, should be deemed excusable. Madness, not to say worse, seems to me the pretension of the Attorney, who declares that Beatrice should not have slain, but accused her father. I have already said that she, by means of letters had recommended herself to persons of great credit, in order that they might endeavor to save her from imminent and most bitter perils. On the day of the banquet of which I spoke, with warm supplications she begged the guests, horror-struck by the ferocity of Cenci, to save her ; and finally, she presented an address to the pontifical throne. If the unfortunate girl was not able to raise her voice higher, will you condemn her because thick walls, deep vaults, bolted doors, and a rigid and

suspicious watch prevented her? Will you then condemn the supplicating maid because your ears, deafened by the joys of victory, were not able to listen to the groans of misfortune? God help us! It may be as well, henceforth, to absolve the thief, and punish the robbed, because he did not keep his property well locked; no more should the assassin, but the wounded, be sent to prison because he allowed himself to be taken unarmed by the snares which his enemy had treacherously set for him.

“And let us grant even for hypothesis, that the Attorney is right in his suppositions; Lady Beatrice having killed her father instead of accusing him, she would only deserve the penalty of transportation, according to the precepts of the law of the great Adrian, and not that of capital punishment.

“The Attorney is in error, also, when he argues that the reasons adduced by me are of avail in case of actual or imminent violence, and not when a certain space of time intervenes between the violence and the murder, and when death has been given with one's own hand, and not procured by means of assassins.

“He is in error, I say, since Lady Beatrice confesses it is true she killed her father by her own hand, but in the very act when he was about to consummate the violence; and mark that, awoke by force, between fright and anger, perhaps she did not recognize, as she certainly might not, her father. And let us still grant that she had recognized him.—But, your Honors, know that I, unaware, have profaned a most holy name; for can this title be given to Count Cenci without a manifest offence to nature, without an injury to those who are deserving of it? When a wretch breaks the boundaries which nature has placed between father and child—when he neither protects nor loves his child, on the contrary, persecutes and hates her, tramples upon her, body and soul, such a man is no longer a father; rather the



more is he guilty and deserving of death, as were greater in him the obligations to protect and love her.

“ And be it, for an hypothesis which I deny, that Lady Beatrice killed the wretched man not upon the act, but after, the penalty of capital punishment could not be inflicted, but transportation. The law of the great Adrian treats exactly upon the case of a son killed by his father, not at the moment, but after some interval of time, while they were hunting together in the woods. If the father had surprised him in the act, then they would not have considered him deserving the penalty of transportation for the murder of his son, but they would have discharged him. All legal authorities tell us that a just resentment for an offence diminishes the punishment, even when a long time has passed between the injury and death.

“ And in our city, in this very tribunal, there occur examples of penalties mitigated on account of the weakness of the sex, without there being adduced any just cause or pretext to lessen the crime ; and it is not many years ago that this happened in a case of parricide, where a merciful regard was shown for the mother and daughter both guilty of it. And must I believe that a cruel rigor is to be adopted against a most beautiful, and, what is vastly more important, a most innocent girl ?

“ But, ah ! with her innocence let also her age, hardly three lustres, prevail with you, which does not consent to fierce deeds being conceived, much less committed ; let her wonderful beauty, for which she is the admiration of all who behold her, prevail upon you. The orator Hyperides revealing to the judges the graces of the accused girl defended by him, did so move their hearts, that they dared not condemn her. And, oh ! why is not Lady Beatrice here ? for I would show you a head made by the hand of God, all candor, all gentleness, placed in this world to be a witness of what must be the face of innocence in heaven,



and then say to you : Now, brand upon it, if you dare, a mark of infamy !

But where have I digressed ? And where has the excessive anxiety to see this excellent girl saved at any cost drawn me ? I retrace my steps—I repent of having implored pity—I condemn myself for having asked mercy—not because it is not proper in every case to appeal to the benevolent feelings of man, which are always the best, but because it seems to me that Lady Beatrice has no need of these in the hard pass to which fortune has brought her. When we shall all be no more, and of our bones not even the ashes shall be found—when our times and our affairs shall be forgotten, the name of Beatrice Cenci will make the hearts of all those who will then be living to beat—as the buoy floating upon the sea gives warning that in the depths of the waters lies the anchor—then Beatrice, alone surviving us in fame, will recall these inglorious years fallen irrevocably within the abyss of the past. Since from her this age will have a title and a name, it is in your power, O judges ! to act so that the recollection of it to posterity may be either acceptable or abominable.

“ Ah ! let it not be said that here, in Rome, in the seat of the Catholic world, the courtesan had an altar in the Pantheon, and Beatrice, the most courageous of girls, the scaffold—that wantonness found divine honors, and chastity, death. Oh ! would that I had the authority of Scipio, for, imitating his example, I would exclaim now : ‘ In this month, in these days, a year ago a Roman girl, overcoming the weakness of her sex, conquering all cowardice, knew how to defend courageously her purity : more virtuous than Lucretia, less unhappy than Virginia, may her name and example last as a proud boast of the Latin women.’ Why do we remain any longer to discuss whether she is guilty or innocent ? Let us go, honorable judges, defenders and peo-

ple, to the Vatican, to thank God for having reserved this illustrious girl to our times."

Then he spoke of Bernardino, and said :

"In faith, I was about to forget it ; and in fact the accusation against him is not worth the merit of a defence. Blessed God ! how is it possible to suppose a little boy of twelve an accomplice in a murder ? Either believing the assertion of the Attorney, which is false, or accepting the confession of Lady Beatrice, which is true, we still find the accusation to be absurd. If Lady Beatrice, moved by a sudden emotion of her soul, killed the wicked violator, she could not have had any counsellors or accomplices. If on the contrary, as the Attorney imagines, the murder of Count Cenci was perpetrated by assassins, for what good, then, to admit Bernardino to the secret of it ? For advice perhaps ? Twelve years does not seem a suitable age to furnish advice in a matter of parricide ! The magnificent Pico della Mirandola, for his wonderful learning at eighteen years, was hailed as the *Phoenix of talents* ; but in the twelfth year to be considered, and to be able to sit in consultation to commit such an enormous crime, is a thing to make Satan himself tremble for his infernal throne. Or, instead of advice, perhaps they sought Bernardino for aid ? Oh ! to the arms of two assassins grown upon the mountains of the Abruzzi the aid of a boy of twelve could have been but little help. Oh ! I should fear to insult you if I should stop longer to speak of the boy—let his accusation be among the monstrous visions which man, drunk by the spectacle of human crime, sometimes dreams in closing his eyes upon the bench of justice."

And he ended. Either by the effect of the words of Farinaccio, or, as it is supposed, the boldness of his face, his sonorous voice, and the eloquence of his delivery, the bystanders were struck by his oration, which I, quoting, have cleared of the superfluous and useless, particularly of all the metaphors, with

the exception of one or two, to give an example of the style of the times already declining to a corruption of literature. A suppressed and deep whispering flew from mouth to mouth ; and had it not been respect for the presence of the Pope, and more probably fear of the halberds of the German soldiers, the hall would have resounded with applause. The judges retired to consider their sentence.

After a long delay it was rumored that the decree would not be issued until late in the night. The bystanders retired, some hoping, some fearing, according to the variety of minds and feeling ; all however beseeching the Madonna of Good Counsels to inspire the minds of the judges.

Farinaccio, intoxicated by the noise of his own eloquence, no less than by the praises which from every side rained upon him, and trusting reason would prevail in the issue of the case, gave himself up as usual, even until a late hour in the night, to his accustomed companions, who were never weary of praising the chastity, the courage and beauty of the Latin girl ; and (what at first seems strange, but is human nature) these dissipated fellows honored and prided themselves upon the virtue of Beatrice as if they had constituted her the depository of that fame, which every one of them should have zealously watched for himself. Farinaccio returning home very late, a servant handed him a dispatch with the papal seal, which he said had been brought by a valet of the palace at midnight exactly. At that hour the destiny of the Cencis had been decided : he opened it tremblingly, in the hope of finding the acquittal of the prisoners ; but he was deceived. It was a brief from the Pope, creating him a Counsellor of the Holy Roman Rota, with the prerogatives, honors, and emoluments annexed to that office. The brief, dictated with the empty grandiloquence and fine words of the court, praised the learning, and the virtues even of the new Counsellor.

"Better so," exclaimed Farinaccio ; "it is not what I had hoped, but it seems to promise well. If I had displeased him, His Holiness would not have hastened to give me this splendid token of his approval."

In such trust he slept upon the welcome bed with golden dreams.

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At about eleven o'clock at night the judges had met in the same hall where the Advocates had pleaded. One chandelier alone, veiled in a circle of dark silk, shone in the middle of the table : they were all seated, and whispered to each other. The veiled light illumined, and at the same time darkened sensations which they feared, and which, timidly wavering in their minds, threatened to let their thoughts appear on their faces ; yet the hour, the place, still resounding with the words of Farinaccio, and their consciences which caused them to be heard like the distant sound of quiet waters, all disposed them to pity. Suddenly the Chief Justice glanced at a paper not before noticed by him, and supposing it to be some part of the process, opened and read it ; his face from pale turned to a livid hue : he took it with a trembling hand and passed it to the colleague who sat next to him, and this one to another, and so on until having made the tour of the bench, it returned to the Chief Justice. His shuddering and paleness were diffused like an electric spark upon the faces and veins of his colleagues : now all of them, with their heads bent and their eyes fixed upon the red carpet, were absorbed in the same thoughts : it seemed as if an iron yoke weighed upon their necks. Such, I think, must have been the aspect of the guests at the banquets of the kings of Persia, where an archer at the head of the table stood ready to fire at any one who should have dared to raise his head. This paper

had the power ascribed to the head of Medusa ; it had petrified them all. Indeed it was such as to change into stone every heart of flesh ; for it contained written and copied the sentence which condemned the entire family of the Cencis to death. *Lucrezia, Beatrice and Bernardino to be beheaded ; Giacomo to be killed by the club ; then all torn with hot pincers, and afterwards quartered ;* THEIR PROPERTY ALSO TO BE CONFISCATED IN FAVOR OF THE APOSTOLIC CHAMBER.

Long, deep and terrible was the silence. One could distinctly hear the crackling of the candles, which were burning : the sand of the hour glass was heard grain falling upon grain ; the noise of the moths on the beams of the hall struck upon the ear—it was a death-like silence.

“ Are then my judges cowards ? ”

This sudden voice stunned, even to the very depths of their souls, those pallid wretches. Whence did it come ? The eyes could neither distinguish from whence it came, nor from whom. The lips that proffered it avoided the light : amid the darkness, in the upper part of the hall, a man moved his heavy limbs. From him this voice certainly came, and the judges knew it ; for all starting to their feet fixed their eyes upon that part. And who is he, who in Rome has the command ? He is the sceptered Priest, the Vicar of Christ the Redeemer, he who speaks face to face with the Lamb of God who sacrificed himself for the safety of man.—And who, but he, would have dared in Rome to speak of death ?

The Chief Justice desperately seized the pen : shuddering he dipped it into the ink, which seemed to him like blood ; shuddering he signed—and then, without turning his face, with his hand he pushed the paper to his colleague, and this one also signed it, as he had done, and passed it to the others. If the angels saw this infamy, they must have covered their eyes with their wings and wept. But they signed, and then went out.

Clement VIII. descended with heavy steps from the throne, approached the table, extended his hand aching with the gont to the sentence, and groaning with pain thrust it into his bosom like a dagger.

The judges separated silently, each one detesting himself and the others. In the darkness of the night, some here, some there, went off with wary steps, like thieves afraid of being met by the watch. All received the price of blood : promoted to more eminent offices, they received greater salaries : no one felt the shame of Judas, by restoring the money to the priest ; no one his remorse, by hanging himself upon the first tree that came in his way : they lived and died, internally despised and hated ; flattered openly by those who had need of them ; and after their death, for less than a crown their relatives bought a common epitaph, which, carved upon a stone four times larger than that which for a long space of time covered the ashes of Torquato Tasso in Rome, gave witness that these bones had belonged to most honest magistrates, well deserving of their country and humanity. But the misery which rankled in their breasts did not appear on the outside ; their torments had not, and could not have a comforter : they suffered in silence, nor dared ever to raise a groan for fear that the echo might take it, and throw it back in their faces as an accusation. Those judges ages ago have been judged.—

Let us turn from their fate, for such wretches do not even deserve a curse.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE CONFESSION.

Di sante preci il frate soccorrea  
La derelitta alla tremenda andata ;  
E levata la mano la sciogliea  
Benedicendo, dalle sue peccata.

GROSSI, *Ildegonda*.

THE Pope had placed the sentence in his bosom like a poniard, and, like an assassin, watched the time and place to use it. The complaints of the people reached even to the Vatican, like the roaring of the sea in a tempest, and he was awaiting until the swelling of the popular storm should somewhat abate, in order to accomplish his fixed purpose.

While speculating thus he was waiting the occasion ; fortune put it into his hands, nor could either a more ready or a better one have been devised. Count Cenci, as he himself had often wished, was fatal to his family not only in life, but even after death he seemed to stretch his hand out of the tomb to grasp his relatives, and drag them into it with himself. Paolo Santa Croce, relative of the Cenci family, of whom we spoke in the beginning of this sad history, decided in his intention of killing his mother Lady Costanza, had not been able until now to do it without open danger. It happened that this unfortunate lady retired into Subiaco, to recruit with the pure air of the country her failing health. Don Paolo, aware of this, went there secretly and killed her without mercy with a dagger : then taking what money he

could find in the palace, fled the justice of the world, but not that of God ; since we read in the history of Novaes, that a short time after he died by a violent death. On this account a great terror spread throughout Rome ; and the Pope, to take advantage of it in his own favor, was disposed to use great rigor. He therefore ordered the arrest of Don Onofrio, marquess of Oriuolo, brother of Don Paolo, charged with being his accomplice. The officers executed the command while the poor gentleman was returning home, after playing at balls in the palace Orsini at Montegiordano ; and although from the trial no other proof was found, excepting the one of having written to his brother that if the criminality of his mother asserted by him were true, he should behave as becoming a cavalier, he was condemned to death. The Orsini family very powerful in adherents and credit, upon whom, by the natural and civil death of the Santa Croce the estates of Oriuolo would devolve, spoke in high terms of praise of the Pope's salutary rigor, and drew with them a great part of the nobility. These eulogiums increased greatly afterwards, when the Apostolic Chamber, without any opposition, consented that the above mentioned estate should pass to the Orsini family ; and this was done with the cunning intention of escaping the charge of avarice, and smoothing the way to grasp the property of the Cenci family, at which the Aldobrandini aimed : the Cardinal of St. George also purposely added fuel to the flame, by artfully spreading round reports to terrify the already frightened citizens. No fathers, no mothers, cried the infuriated people, are now safe within the domestic home ; every tie of nature is broken ; it was dangerous to beget children, dangerous to nurse them, imminently more dangerous to keep them in the house when adults. Universal terror took a thousand voices and aspects, without avoiding even the grotesque ; for father Zanobi, master of novices in the college of the Jesuit fathers, raising his eyes piteously to heaven, with a heavy sigh affirmed,

"that now a days poor fathers ran the risk of going to sleep alive, and waking up murdered."

The populace, following an ancient custom, the tide of their passions having reached its greatest height, began by degrees to diminish in their enthusiasm and finally to subside into indifference.

Popular sympathy had accompanied Beatrice even to the threshold of her prison : there the doors having been shut in its face, it remained like a sentinel, and watched all that day and even a great part of the night : finally it felt tired and hungry ; sleep weighed down its eyes, hunger took possession of its vitals : add that the night was dark also, and no one could see it. Now sympathy, even the heartiest, if not seen gets discouraged ;—and the night was also cold ; so that, after having for some time wavered betwixt will and will not, it decided to go home in order to return early next morning. Arriving there, it ate, drank, and went to bed : next morning after arising, it had almost forgotten Beatrice, and in the streets it met with a new excitement which made it weep, and the more recent one had the power of making it forget the one which it had committed to memory. The popular heart must be open to so many griefs, that it cannot mourn long and entirely for a particular one.

Beatrice remained alone with her sorrows. Oh ! these indeed remain faithful to us, and never leave until having consigned us with their own hands to death ! Men usually say : as faithful as a dog. They are wrong ; it would be better to say as faithful as grief.

When it appeared to the Pope a proper time to move the ship and unfurl the sail, summoning Monsignore Ferdinando Taverna to him, who was in agony for the Cardinal's hat, conferred on him a little while after under the title of St. Eusebius, he gave the sentence saying :

"I put in your care the Cencis' case, and as soon as convenient you will execute due justice."

And immediately after, to withdraw from solicitations, and the fear of becoming merciful, he went off to Montecavallo, under the pretext of being ready the following morning to consecrate Monsignore Drikestein, bishop of Ulm in Switzerland ; in reality, however, that the orders given might receive a ready and complete execution.

Monsignore Taverna, a very docile instrument to the papal will, went hastily to the palace, and assembling without delay the congregation of criminal judges, they planned together the manner of giving execution the next morning to the sentence.

In the old extract of the *Journal of the brotherhood of St. John, beheaded in Rome, book xvi. page 66*, we read, " On Friday the 10th of September, 1599, at two hours after midnight notice was given us that the following morning several prisoners in Torre di Nona, and the prison Savella, were to be executed; thereafter at five hours after midnight I assembled the brotherhood, chaplain, sexton and assistant, and having gone to the prisons of Torre di Nona, and performed the usual prayers, there were consigned to us condemned to death the undernamed :—Don Giacomo Cenci and Don Bernardino Cenci, sons of the deceased Count Don Francesco Cenci. In the prison Savella at the same hour one portion of our brotherhood went, and having entered into the chapel, and performed the usual prayers, there were consigned to them the undermentioned Roman ladies condemned to death ; namely Lady Beatrice Cenci, and Lady Lucrezia Petroni, wife of the deceased Count Don Francesco Cenci."

And because it seems to me a duty, after two centuries and a half, to give to the present generation the names of those who assisted at the horrible tragedy, let me be allowed to transcribe them here as I find them registered in the same extract.

" In the above mentioned prisons of Torre di Nona were present Sir Giovanni Aldobrandini, Sir Aurelio del Migliore, Sir Cammillo Moretti, Sir Francesco Vai, and Sir Migliore Guidotti ;

and in addition Domenico Sogliani secretary, and the Lord Chaplain. To those of Corte Savella went Sir Anton Maria Corazza, Sir Horazio Ansaldi, Sir Anton Coppoli, Sir Ruggiero Ruggieri, comforter, Giovanbattista Nannoni, sexton, Pierino, assistant, and our chaplain, and myself Santi Vannini, who wrote this."

While this company of pious Tuscans are preparing to render her death less sad, what is Beatrice doing?

She is sleeping as on the night in which she was awoke by the groans of a dying man, and this dying man was her father murdered at the foot of her bed. Let us not awake her; only approach quietly to look once more upon her divine beauty. Does she not seem a celestial creature? Look at those smooth cheeks, which have not yet lost all the hue of her pure soul; a tranquil sleep colors them with a more rosy tint, and gilds them with the reflection of the white wings that it extends over her person. Look at her lips; they have drank many, alas! too many, of her tears, and yet half open they smile a sad, but a sweet smile:—once this smile appeared like a star's ray upon the dew of a rose: now it resembled the veiled light, which the setting sun throws upon the cloud impregnated with the storm. The storm will come by-and-by; the painful passion will burst forth; but now that ray appears shining in purple and gold;—now that smile seems placed upon those lips by her guardian angel.

Look—no, let us not look upon her eyes: once when she raised them, the air became more clear, the sun's rays redoubled in splendor, they outshone the lights of the joyful feast; now tears have darkened them; by them alone one could see what a weight of misery has been heaped upon her. Ah! let sleep not leave her;—would that it might be eternal! Indeed, what a pity it would be to wish her to reopen them to the light? Are not light and grief the same things to her? If she could awake in the embrace of God, in the eternal fields, far, far away from



the sorrows of this cursed earth—what a great mercy it would be for her ! O Lord, let her awake no more ; take back the breath with which you gave life to this dear girl ; the fragile and wandering butterfly has broken her wings ;—do not impose a new flight upon her, call her instead to an immortal one—In vain ! God keeps his finger inexorably fixed upon the forehead of every human creature, and destiny must be accomplished. Her eyes are to open to new and more horrible sights ; the fibres of her heart must vibrate with the tortures of more piercing sensations, and then she will die : God wills that her life should be consumed by the fire of grief, and that the flame should last as long as it can be nourished by a fragment of bone, or a thread of nerve.

She still sleeps ; but the smile vanishes from her lips, and her eye-brows contract. Upon this forehead so smooth, so soft, in a short time misfortune will have traced a deeper furrow. Of what is she thinking ? Do the last recollections of love, which are yet divine, pass through her mind ? Or rather, does she again live over her father's cruelty, and see again the glittering of the steel which pierced his throat, or her past tortures ? Listen ; she speaks.

“ Why, O God, art thou so unfriendly to me ? what have I done ? ”

Raising her hand suddenly, the chains with which they had bound her for several days, sent forth a sound, which, striking sharply and slowly, dispersed itself through the dark air of the prison : yet it was not able to awake her ; she groans and sleeps. Then there stood before her a phantom, which seemed like her brother Don Giacomo ; approaching softly to her bed, it said : “ come, arise, it is the hour.” To which she replied by asking : “ where are we to go ? ” the phantom leaned over her as if it wished to whisper it in her ears, but the head with a profusion



of blood fell from its shoulders, rolling over the bed. Then Beatrice uttered a desperate cry, and awoke.

She awoke, and rising resolutely, looked around her. Nothing appeared changed : the lamp was still burning before the image of the Virgin at the head of the bed ; beyond her bed she could discern but little ; a most profound silence pervaded the prison, and yet in one corner, though she had not seen them, two persons kneeling mentally prayed to the Lord for her soul.

She heard a step, then another ; then from the black figures a form appeared approaching very slowly within the rays from the lamp, and revealed the venerable aspect of a capuchin friar, emaciated by fasting and years. Beatrice looks upon that pale face, and speaks not a word. The old man raised his hands as if blessing her, and recited the prayers which have the power of expelling, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the evil spirit from the body of the possessed. She allowed him to finish his exorcism, then in a sweet voice said :

“ Father ! the devil has never dwelt within me.”

“ Amen, my daughter ; but he is always going about like a roaring lion, hence it is better always to be prepared to meet his assaults. My daughter, do you wish to approach the tribunal of penitence ? I am here ready to listen to you.”

“ To morrow.”

“ To morrow ! And why should we postpone to the morrow what we can do now ? Is man master of the morrow ?”

“ So unprepared—thus taken by surprise—suddenly awaking from a terrible dream !”

“ Does death assign us the hour in order not to surprise us ? Does it not come unexpectedly like a thief in the dark ? Christ has said so.”

At this moment the door creaking on its hinges opened, and by the light of the torch, were seen entering the substitute of the Attorney, accompanied by several sheriffs, who, with cruel

faces, without roughness, as without kindness, approached the bed of Beatrice. Sir Ventura, for such was the name of the substitute, began :

“ If by deferring the notice I could, noble lady, change your destiny, I would willingly do so. My painful office obliges me to read your sentence to you.”

“ Of death ?” exclaimed Beatrice.

The capuchin friar covered his face with both his hands ; the others bowed theirs. Beatrice convulsively grasped the tunic of the friar, and groaned from the depth of her soul :

“ Oh, God !—God ! how is it possible that I should die so young ? Hardly born, why do they wish in such a horrible manner to take me away from life ? Lord—Lord, what crime have I committed ? Life ! But do you know what life is at sixteen years ?”

“ Life,” replied the capuchin to her, “ is a weight which grows with our years. Happy those who are not born to carry it ! After them, happy are those to whom God grants they may lay it aside soon ! What do you find, my daughter, in your past years that would induce you to prolong the sum of it ?”

“ Nothing,” replied Beatrice hastily ; then she stopped as if memory seemed to present her a glimpse more bright ; but hardly remembered, it vanished ; she then, with a low voice more humbled, added :

“ Nothing—nothing !”

“ Ah ! well then, courage ! let us soon rise from this table where the viands are ashes, the drinks tears.”

“ But the manner, oh, father ! the manner—oh !”

“ Providence, my daughter, has furnished a thousand ways to go out from life ; only one to enter it—the speediest one is the best ; but all are blest, provided they lead to Heaven.”

“ But the infamy, father, the shame thrown upon my memory ?”

"Those are thoughts of the dust. Before the judgment of God, what does the judgment of men matter? What are ages before the breath of the Lord? Fame passes, and time carries it with itself. Upon the threshold of the Infinite, years are not even distinguished as dust. Turn, my daughter, to Heaven, and forget worldly things."

"Alas! death!" murmured Beatrice, and the fatal word passing through her red lips, froze, and whitened them—a cold perspiration covered her forehead, her limbs shuddered, and her eyelids drooping heavily, shadowed her wandering eyes.

"Help! help!" cried Virginia; and was on the point of going for spirits and salts to revive her, when Beatrice, recovering, said:

"It is passed;" and with her own hands she divided her hair upon her forehead bathed with perspiration. Then, turning to the bystanders, she continued: "Pardon me, gentlemen, it was a moment of weakness. Our Saviour had it—excuse it, then, in me, who am a sinner. Now, sir, you may fulfill your office: I am listening."

Sir Ventura then read the sentence, not omitting a *hyphen*, or an *etc.*, with slow, monotonous, mournful voice, like the tolling of the bell which knells for the dying. When he had finished, he raised his eyes to Beatrice, for he had already prepared a little speech about the virtue of patience, spoken by him on similar occasions, and, it seemed to him, with very good effect; and by changing it a little, was thinking of applying it to the present case; but seeing her unmoved, it need not be said that he was very much pleased for sparing it to himself. Bowing, he went out with his sheriffs to repeat this office with the other condemned. "The speech," he thought to himself, "will do for those who have need of it—nothing can be too much."

"Virginia," said Beatrice, taking the girl by the hand, "please to go out a moment. Time, as you see, is short—and

before dying I must confess and prepare my soul. Go. I will call for you."

Virginia felt her heart breaking ; she went off without saying a word, and even if she had wished to speak she could not. Beatrice, her eyes accustomed to the darkness, saw in the corner of her prison a kneeling man who kept his face hidden in his hands—he was also covered with his hood, so that not a part of his face could be seen ; he remained so motionless, that he resembled an inanimate being.

Why does this man stop ? And who is he, that would presume to have the secrets of heaven revealed to him ? Confession can be heard but by one man only : thus it is a sacrament—otherwise sacrilege.

She hesitatingly kept silent ; the capuchin also dared not open his lips. Beatrice looked at one, then at the other ; nor being able to penetrate the mystery, still remained silent.

That kneeling man was Guido Guerra, the desperate lover of Beatrice. And what has he come for in this solemn hour ? Why does he wish to sadden her last moments ? Has she not suffered enough ? To no being was the hatred of others so fatal as his love to Beatrice. It was he who kindled in that maiden's heart an affection, which he afterwards extinguished in blood. It was he who, with the intention of saving her, but incautiously, took away not only life, but her fame, the last relic of those unhappily betrayed. Let him be satisfied with all this, and go away. Perhaps he wishes to see whether her love still lasts ? What does it matter ? If this flame burns for ever, alas ! like the lamp of the buried Vestal, it burns to die, it burns to light the tomb. Or does he come to drink the last tear of the desolate girl ?—Back ! this would be the pleasure of a vampire. Or does he come to revive in her soul hopes which she has already laid aside, as the ancient maidens of Greece cut their hair upon the tombs of the dead ? Let him leave her to

die in peace ; for, even living, both would be divided (and she has told him so) by a river of blood, and they would wander perpetually along its banks without ever being able or willing to ford it ? When destiny puts in motion the wheel of misfortune to crush human beings, is man to presume to put himself between the wheel and the crushed one ? The last and only duty, which remains to the friend of the unfortunate, is to put a kiss upon the tomb-stone like a seal to a finished epistle. The Lord, who sees this act, will shortly break the seal, and will restore the inconsolable survivor to eternal peace.

But Guido came into the prison of Beatrice. If a god, or a devil urged him, he minded not, he knew not. He wished to see Beatrice, and he does see her: he is regardless of everything else; and now he feels that he would willingly press the hand of the maiden, if it were extended to him, although at the very moment the falling axe might sever them both thus grasped. He feels that he would have his head by the side of hers, his lips close to hers, even were they within the basket which receives the heads cut off by the executioner. And she, when he shall have thrown the hood from his face, and she recognizes the man who was the root of all her evil, how will she sustain his gaze ? What words will she utter ?

Guido rose to his feet; he moved a few steps forward, staggering ; then he stopped, and wept. The girl felt those tears descend into her soul as sweet as the tears of a mother.

“Who is weeping ?” she said ; “I would not have believed that in this place there could be a soul more desolate than mine.”

And looking to heaven, she sighed sadly.

These words, which came from the affectionate lips of Beatrice, sounded in the ears of Guido like harmony of Paradise. What his passion had dared not, her voice had overcome : throwing aside every fear, he hastily drew back the hood, and



showed the face of Guido, speaking and beautiful like a head of Correggio's. Silently and tremblingly he approached Beatrice : she recognized him, and started affrighted ; then Guido also started back a step : neither the unhappy lover, nor the maiden dared to utter a word, nor breathe ; the rattling of chains, shaken by the convulsive heavings of Beatrice, alone disturbed that silence.

Like young birds, hardly fluttering their wings then drooping them fatigued ; thus these unfortunate lovers raised their eyes only to lower them immediately upon the ground. Their souls were in their eyes ; from their lips, pressed like their hearts, not even a sigh escaped. The lips of Beatrice will not speak ; her eyes have spoken enough ; the spirit of love passing before her like that of God, said :—" You accused your father to him ; you poured in his breast an implacable fury ; if he had loved you less, he would not have become a murderer : he showed his great love when he severed at the same time another's life, and his own hope ; Guido preferred your purity to his own happiness." And the spirit of love sparkled in her eyes with love and pardon.

Beatrice, yielding to the instinct which urged her, moved to embrace him ; then she stopped, blushing, and wept, and at her tears the others wept. Her lips refreshed by this dew of tears, would have perhaps opened to a sound ; but the monk, who standing near watched their emotions, placing his head between theirs, and overshadowing them with his white beard, which fell from his chin, with a low voice said :

" Silence ! A word escaping from your lips would be death to him, and shame to me. You are joined in matrimony. That which God binds in heaven, man may separate, but not put asunder. Now, my children, it is enough."

And with a strong arm he separated them. The mild Beatrice, easily consented to the prayer ; but Guido, passionately repulsed the brother ; who with a gentle reproof said :



“ Then you wish to pour shame upon my white hairs because I was merciful to you ?”

Guido bent down and kissed the iron handcuff which bound the right wrists of Beatrice ; he saw the gold ring which he had sent her by means of Farinaccio, and he sighed forth a word, which Beatrice either did not hear, or did not wish to notice. The friar meanwhile arranged the hood upon Guido's head, and passing his arm around his waist dragged him towards the door.

The friar said to the suspicious keepers that his companion, weakened by watching, had not been able to bear the sad spectacle, and consigned him to the care of the brothers of Mercy ; who receiving him with all manner of kindness led him out of the prison. He descending those winding stairs bathed every step with tears.

Beatrice, like one petrified, stood looking at the door from whence Guido had disappeared ; she thought herself dreaming ; except that the chain, shaking from time to time, gave her assurance she was indeed awake. Involuntarily she looked at the handcuff kissed by Guido, and saw his tears upon it glistening like iris by the light of the lamp ; they looked like gems, and so they seemed to appear to her, for, sighing, she exclaimed :

“ Behold the wedding jewels, that my bridegroom has given me.”

When Father Angelico returned, she kindly asked :

“ And now where has he gone ?”

“ To the Convent !”

“ Ah, how miserable he is !”

“ Very miserable ! He does not always stay in the Convent ; often, in the middle of the night, a light knock is heard at the doors, and Guido presents himself. The friars receive him, and hide him through charity and gratitude, on account of the many alms with which he and his ancestors were generous to the Con

vent. He asks for neither food, nor rest: he goes to church, kneels before the great altar, and passes hour after hour upon the cold steps as if in a trance; and were it not for his tears, he would not seem to be alive. Great is the misery of the man whose only manifestation of life is his tears. I think were his worst enemy to see him so reduced, he would feel pity for him."

Thus spoke the monk, and his words cancelled from the mind of Beatrice the last traces of that fatal night, when she saw at the foot of her bed her father murdered by the hand of her lover.

"But in the day-time where does he hide? Father, when you see him, I implore you to tell him to go far from Rome; this air is fatal to him; here, I know, cruel men live. Do you know who alone feels pity in priestly Rome? The executioner!"

"I will tell him."

"And if he hesitate, add that I beg him to do so."

"Very well,—now then, my daughter, is the time to turn your thoughts to Heaven: prostrate yourself; for as much as you humble yourself, so much you will be exalted. Contrition is born of mercy; and when they present themselves together at the throne of God, it rarely happens that justice does not lay aside her sword."

Beatrice kneeling, opened to the confessor the secrets of her soul. Light faults, little errors, and which she considered very heavy, showing how great was the innocence of that courageous, but gentle spirit. The friar, in listening, bewailed the hard necessity which had forced her to stain her hands with her father's blood. Beatrice was silent, and had not yet confessed the parricide. The friar, skilled in human passions, attributed her silence to shame, and for this, instead of being offended, thought better of her; hence he then discreetly urged her to reveal all her sins, encouraging her to throw off all her shame; but she sincerely replied:

"My sins, for as many as I have been able to recollect, I have confessed all ; for those which I involuntarily omitted, may the Divine Goodness pardon me."

"Still, search."

"I will search again ;" and remaining in a thoughtful attitude, she prolonged her silence beyond the expectation of the friar ; who imagining that now to be dissimulation which he first thought bashfulness, not without a little harshness, he asked her,

"And tell me, by whose hands was Count Cenci murdered ?"

"I must not confess the sins of others." And she said these words with so much candor, that the capuchin looked astonished.

"And you did not kill him then ?"

"I ?—I killed him not."

"And why did you, then, accuse yourself of it ?"

"I, father, have suffered such painful torments, that to think them over I shudder, and can hardly believe that my body was able to bear them without expiring ; and yet I was fully resolved to die in the torture in testimony of the truth ; but with infinite prayers my relatives, my friends and the Advocates begged me, and with abundant reasons urged me, to assume upon myself the crime ; for in this manner, they hoped, I would be able to save my mother and brothers. As to myself, it would then have been easy to declare me excusable on account of the persecutions and attempts of Count Cenci. The reasons certainly did not persuade me much, nor would even the prayers have conquered me ; but fearing to show too much harshness against my relatives, I bowed my head, and offered the sacrifice of my life and fame in order to attempt to save that of Lady Lucrezia and my brothers. I had a presentiment that I should lose myself and not save them, and I said so : the fact has proved that I imagined right. Patience ! So it pleased God, and so be it—it was not my fault, that those dear ones were not saved."

"But did you not affirm your crime upon oath?"

"The Advocates persuaded me, that before human and divine laws it was not a sin to defend one's own life by means of the death of others, much less could one offend God by defending it with a false oath ; and I swore."

"Oh, Sophists ! oh, Sophists ! When is there anything lost by saying the truth ?"

"It seemed so to me ; but he recommended me to place entire confidence in him ; and so great is the reputation of learning, which he enjoys, that I feared to appear too presumptuous by preferring my opinion to his."

"And who was he that recommended it to you ?"

"He—Guido, who sent me this ring—the ring which was to be blessed at our marriage." And while she thus spoke, her face through modesty had become crimson. The brother continued :

"Expose fully, my daughter, the entire truth ; perchance you may have sinned, more than you think, against yourself."

"But the secrets of God ?"

"The secrets of God," replied the capuchin severely, "are buried in the heart of man ; and from man, you know, one can tear out the heart, but not the secret."

Then Beatrice told all the truth, without omitting the slightest particular. The monk, who had begun to listen incredulously, by degrees was forced to believe in the sincere aspect, the calm words, and the candor of the magnanimous girl ; and while she still spoke, the monk struck his forehead, exclaiming :

"Oh, my God ! my God ! was there ever seen in the world a more blessed soul than this ?"

And Beatrice having put an end to her confession, the astonished friar said :

"Holy soul, I absolve you, since this is the duty of my ministry ; but I protest that I ought to kneel before you, and beg you

to recommend me to God. From whose lips can prayers be more acceptable to Him, than from these most pure and innocent ones of yours? Pray to God by yourself; I will join my prayers to yours, which must certainly reach heaven; nor will I indeed pray for you, for you have no need of it; but rather for this unhappy city, and for the safety of those who have condemned you."

The girl knelt before the sacred images which hung from the wall; and turning, as women are more accustomed to do, towards the Blessed Virgin, gave thanks for calling her so soon from this life, and above all for having granted to her the favor of seeing her dear Guido once more, who, not being able to be her companion on earth, she hoped might be united with her eternally in heaven.

But here she stopped, as if she had trodden upon a viper, and frightened, she asked:

"Father, tell me, for pity sake, will Guido be pardoned? Will he be made worthy of eternal salvation? Shall I not tremble at his aspect? Will it be granted me to grasp that hand which has murdered my father?"

"Do you suppose, my daughter, that we should be able to enjoy paradise if we did not forget earthly sorrows? To an immortal soul the memory of having once been a prisoner within a cell of clay would not only be a wearisome thought, but one of shame."

"Ah!" replied Beatrice sighing, "yet I would not have wished to forget my love, although full of sorrows."

Then she began again to pray fervently to God; and the monk by her side begged Him, silently, never to let the courage of the innocent girl fail.

A brother of Mercy appeared at that moment upon the threshold of the prison; he beckoned the monk and whispered a word to him; the latter returning to Beatrice, said to her:

“ My daughter, if you desire to be in company with her ladyship, your mother, it will be allowed you.”

“ Let her come—oh ! let her come, poor mother—we will console each other.”



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE GARMENTS.

Mi vestirai di quella veste nera,  
Ch' io stessa di mia mano ho trapuntata.  
GROSSI, *Ildegonda*.

Words have a boundary, and a narrower one than some imagine : the pen is not, as some think, the best conductor of the feelings of the soul. How many sensations, sparkling powerfully in the heart, die languidly upon the paper ! Paper is oftentimes the funeral sheet of thoughts : I will not then describe the passion of the embrace between Beatrice and Lady Lucrezia, nor the bitterness of touching each other's cheeks, each other's mouth, and upon their faces shedding mutual tears.

They threw their arms eagerly about each other's neck.—Alas ! the chains prevented them from embracing freely. I leave untold the convulsive sobs, the desolate words, the long and painful sighs ;—so much yet remains to be told of such miseries, that even to think of them my wearied soul trembles.

But everything has an end here below ; even tears, although the most abundant inheritance left by Adam to his children : at last both were silent. The hearts of these ladies have need of rest to feel a new grief.

Beatrice observing Lady Lucrezia in a showy dress of satin, trimmed with lace, happened to look at her own ; and with great wonder saw that, inadvertently, she also was dressed in a

green dress embroidered with gold, which she was accustomed to wear, in her more peaceful days, in preference to any other.

Memory, often a very importunate friend, recalled to her mind that she wore this very dress when she first saw Guido, and was seen by him ; and it reminded her also that he (with his young mind full of the songs of Petrarca) had often said to her, that at her first appearance to him she looked like Laura. But this was no time to cherish such happy recollections : expelling them from her mind, she began to consider how unbecoming it would have been to go to death in such gay garments. And thinking, as indeed it was true, that Lady Lucrezia, immersed in grief, had not even noticed it, she said :

“ Mother, when we women undertake the voyage of life, our censors say that we take vanity for our provision ; and if any danger threatens us, we would rather let the ship wreck than throw away the cargo. And they are not wholly wrong. Women, when willing, can reform themselves of every other vice, except vanity ; because the former are known, but vanity very seldom, or never ; and it cannot even be fought against, because it does not sustain any assault ; it yields and flies away, or flying, hides itself under our persons like our shadows at noon.”

“ Beatrice, I do not understand you ; for me these are too abstruse matters.”

“ A glance, which you may cast upon yourself, will render it plain ; look how, without paying attention, you have dressed yourself ?”

“ O, great mother of mercy !” exclaimed Lady Lucerzia, astonished, seeing herself in such apparel—“ it may indeed be said that I have lost my senses !”

Beatrice remarked the simple words, and almost smiled ; but soon after she added in a dignified manner :

“ To show ourselves thus, it would seem a vain glory on our

part to challenge death, which is far from our hearts. We bear it with resignation, because God sends it to us ; is it not true, mother ?”

“ You speak like the wise and good girl which I have always known you to be.”

“ Now then, Virginia,” continued Beatrice “ you must try to provide us with any kind of cloth, enough to make two loose garments ; one for myself, the other for my mother, two cords, and two veils—Virginia, my dear girl, why do you not answer ?”

Virginia felt a weight on her heart, which prevented her from uttering a word ; but after sobbing a long time, she answered :

“ I have a piece of bombazine of dark color, and another of black taffety, which my father bought at the fair of Viterbo ;—but I never made a dress of them—because it is best for me not to be observed—nor known—if you wish them ?”

“ Certainly ; and I will give you money enough to buy some less mournful ones ; for a girl of your age ought not to wear either dark or black clothes ;—you see that, when I lived, I wore green. And what shall we do for the cords ?”

“ My father has got some.”

“ And the veils ?”

“ They are furnished by the brothers of mercy,” and here Virginia burst into tears again.

Beatrice pressed her hands upon her bosom as if to repress the outburst of passion ready to break forth, and said :

“ Well ; we shall then have to think of fewer things than I supposed. Haste now, Virginia, for our hours are numbered.”

Virginia returned with the cloth, and Beatrice, without losing any time, began to cut it. She held one edge, Virginia the other, and the scissors flew with wonderful celerity, cutting the threads.

“ Observe, Virginia, how easy the thread of the cloth is cut

—life is a thread also. Now come here, help me in sewing—with long stitches of course : at any rate it will be enough for the time it is to last. If I had to live as long as this stitch will last, which I am about to sew, I would not do it indeed !”

And the three women began to sew ; but Lady Lucrezia and Virginia accomplished but little, since they shed more tears than they sewed stitches. Beatrice with a sweet reproach admonished them :

“ Why do you weep in preparing for me a covering which is to accompany me to the tomb ? Here, in Rome, did Pope Julius weep when he ordered the work of his sepulchre to Michelangelo ? Why then should we weep ? It is true he ordered it far more magnificently than we these garments ; however, he did not see it accomplished, nor did he at last have it according to his desires ; while we shall have the consolation of finishing these with our own hands, and according to our own design.”

But Virginia redoubled her weeping.

“ Believe me, my dear girl, that which renders death bitter is the fear of death : death in itself I do not think a pain, or at least a very short one. Our forefathers, in ancient times, in order to accustom themselves to consider it as an ordinary thing, adorned the public roads with tombs, and the young people often met upon the tombs of their parents to speak of love. Death holds life by the hand, and thus in their turn they move alternately before time. Even in their language death was a condition of life ; for they never used to say : Caius is dead, but Caius lived, Caius has accomplished his last day, Caius was. I remember of having read that a certain man, through the tediousness of a long disease, determined to die, but in abstaining from food it happened he was cured ; but not for this did he consent to live ; and having gone so far towards death (as he said to his friends, who with prayers endeavored to move him from his purpose) it did not seem to him that life was worth the trouble

of retracing his steps. If I am not mistaken, this man was named Titus Pomponius Atticus, and was a friend of Cicero."

"And why then," asked Lady Lucrezia, "do we feel within us so strongly the instinct of life?"

"This, in my opinion, was a providence of nature ; otherwise human creatures would feel the desire of destroying themselves so much, that the aim of creation would fail. After we have overcome the fear, death descends upon our eyes like sleep to the weary. And who is the weary, who does not desire rest ? who the sorrowful being, who would not wish to fall asleep for ever ?"

"But instead of giving so much fear of death, would it not have been better to rejoice life with a little more happiness ? Always terror, always fear, and never love."

These words Virginia, the unfortunate daughter of master Alessandro, said. Beatrice fixed her eyes upon her. The predestined know each other : she also had on her face the mark of the hand of fate impressed.—Beatrice after remaining thoughtful a little while, replied :

"Our intellect, Virginia, does not comprehend the reason of all things ; where it fails let us add faith, and then we will at last touch heaven." Pulling the thread, it broke ; she, showing it to Virginia, added : "This I can only say to you, that in whatever part the thread breaks, it becomes a head of a needleful. Mother, the garments at the top must be low-necked ; and if we show the neck, and part of the shoulders, I hope they will not accuse us of immodesty, thinking of the festival to which we are invited. Festival ! yes, may God help us, where the refreshments will be decapitated heads and goblets of blood."

"Alas ! would that mine alone would have been enough, for now I am already old, and have only a little while longer to remain on this earth ; but yours, poor child, and that of the poor boy—alas ! alas !"

And the tears rained down more plenteously than before. This new outburst of sorrow came so unexpectedly and newly, that Beatrice felt discouraged. Her courage, which she had drawn from the examples and teachings of philosophers, already began to fail ; resting her head upon her hand, the rays of the lamp burning before the image of the Madonna fell upon her. Then she exclaimed :

“ Ah ! it is true, and I had forgotten it ; when every other comfort fails, thou art the star of all storms. Faith is the reason of spiritual beings, and we are already touching the gate of eternity.”

And all three women suddenly arose, as if urged by the same feeling, and had recourse to the celestial image as the swans fly under the maternal wings, when the roaring of the thunder frightens them : and having drawn from that inexhaustible source waters of consolation, they returned again to prepare the funeral garments.

Thus the women alternating with prayers and reasonings reached the dawn of their last day. From the direction of the east a rosy and transparent color promised to the Romans a golden and azure morning ;—the only boast, and perhaps the last misfortune remaining to our most unhappy country.

An assistant of master Alessandro now presented himself, holding in his hands a large pair of scissors. He looked long at Beatrice, and seemed dazzled by so much beauty ; she looked at him, and shuddered ; reassuring herself she thought : “ a voice of mercy may have perchance touched the heart of the Pope ? Is the spectacle of blood to be taken away from the crowds, which cause them to become more ferocious ? ” Then turning to the assistant, she said : “ Speak !—why do you remain there as in a trance ? Speak, we are prepared for anything.”

He hesitatingly answered :



“Your Ladyship—you know—it is a custom—the hair.”

“The hair !” She exclaimed, and immediately raising her hand, she pulled out her comb, and her magnificent golden hair fell down like a wave all over her body. “Now, look ; this is my hair ; what do you wish to do with it ?”

But the assistant, more embarrassed than before, was silent ; she continued :

“Every might has its right ;—the right of the axe is in not being impeded in its blow :—I understand—cut them off, and do it quickly.”

And the hair fell to the ground.

Beatrice looked stupidly at it scattered upon the ground, and tears appeared in her eyes, nor was she able to repress them from falling upon her face and neck. Until now no grief had affected her soul like this, for no one had so humbled her. Were they even now to spare her life, how could she present herself before the noble maidens her companions, so shorn by the hands of the executioner ? Deprived of her hair, her ornament and boast, they had (let the reader pardon the strangeness of the expression for the sake of its efficacy to manifest the feeling, which in that moment took possession of Beatrice) decapitated her head.

See her surrounded with her splendid hair, as the angel of light, in the day of malediction, saw the halo of rays which crowned his forehead scattered at his feet. How many cares, both from her own hands, or those of others, had that hair received ? In how many and various ways she knew how to arrange it on her head ? Poets praising it in their songs, had said it was far more worthy than Berenice's to shine changed into stars in the vault of the firmament. The most beautiful flowers had adorned it, pleased to breathe upon it their last perfumed fragrance. Gems, exulting perhaps in touching it, had shone more bright. Love seemed to have smoothed it with his wings—And all this,

where was it to end ?—To be cut by the hands of the executioner.—Fatality !

Beatrice gathered it, and one hand alone was not enough to hold it. She looked at it a long time, and then, as if it were a person, addressed it thus :

“ Faithful companion in all my misfortune ! I could have wished that you might have descended with me into the tomb. But since God has not granted this, you shall not survive me in the world, perhaps, to hide the baldness of mature age, or to increase the deceit of vanity—born, and grown upon a maiden’s head, you shall not become an instrument of falsehood—and beside, all within you is pregnant with misfortune, and you would carry it to whomsoever it might be who should use you. It is better, then, that you should be destroyed, like me, in the elements which compose you ; let our fatal particles be dispersed in the immense fatality of the world—united we have done, and perhaps might still do harm. I will only except this lock, and let the rest be consumed.”

And she threw it in the fire which burned in the grate. In a short time, of her magnificent hair there only remained a small handful of white dust.

“ Virginia,” continued Beatrice, “ I divide this lock of my hair in two parts, and consign it to you. If some day you should ever meet a tall and handsome man, with blond hair, and the mark of fatality on his face—you will recognize him, since all the unfortunate present in their faces a certain family resemblance ; and I, you remember, when first I met you, recognized you for my sister in sorrow ; listen ” (and she whispered a word in her ear)—“ you will give him this lock : the other you will keep for yourself. I can leave money, dresses, jewels, and I will leave them to you ; but these are not part of myself ; by carrying about you my hair, you will always have a fragment of my being—as long as it lasts, at least—since even the dead are de-

stroyed, and their relics are found no more. They cannot bring you misfortune certainly, because you, poor girl ! are already unfortunate enough. If I could change your state, God knows I would do it—however, I wish you all happiness ; but if you also are to pass days full of bitterness, let death be as sweet to you as this last kiss, which I impress upon your lips.”

Virginia felt so oppressed that she could not speak, and as well as she could she repressed her tears. Not to fall into a swoon at her feet, she took the opportunity, when Beatrice was exchanging a few words with the capuchin, to go softly out of the prison. As soon as the door was shut behind her, the fresh air breathed upon her face like the sharp stroke of axe ; she staggered—a strange dizziness seized her, her legs tottered, and an icy languor oppressed her heart ; she tried to help herself by leaning against the wall with both her hands open, but could not, and fell with a sob senseless by the wall.

The brothers of Mercy, who attentively watched to fulfil every slight desire of the condemned, raised her from the ground ; and having recognized her for the daughter of the executioner, placed her upon a chair, and carried her to her room, thinking that having remained so long in a confined place, the air had hurt her. In truth, who among them would have believed that the daughter of an executioner possessed a heart capable of being broken by pity ?

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PARDON.

Onde tanta pietade in voi si alligna,  
Sacerdoti crudeli ?

ALFIERI, *Saule*.

BEATRICE, approaching Father Angelico, who was kneeling with his face concealed by his hands, praying and weeping before the image of the Madonna, touched him lightly on the shoulder, and said :

“Father, would you please to call the brothers of Mercy ? since to them and to yourself I wish to intrust new requests.”

“Willingly, my daughter ;” and the friar having gone, returned soon in company with the brothers. They held their cowls drawn over their faces, so that nothing could be seen of them but their eyes, sufficient to reveal the passions of their souls. It would have been in vain to recognize from these small openings brother Aldobrandino, who had come there less to comfort than to spy—his dry, curious, glittering, yet anxious glances wandered around.

When they were ranged about, Beatrice said :

“Brothers in Christ ! For the charitable office, which you render me, I give you with all my heart those thanks which my lips cannot pronounce, and I pray God that He will recompense you according to your merits. So much the more I feel touched with veneration for you, since, by remaining hooded, you are unknown to me, thus signifying that you do not aid the individual,

but the suffering creature. Yet I need greater help than you generally are accustomed to give ; and I dare to ask it both from you, and from this most pious spiritual father. Let my new request, I pray you, be an argument, not of indiscretion on my part, but of necessity. With the aid of the Notary of the brotherhood of the Sacred Wounds, I have made my will. Now, fearing lest the tribunals might put some obstacle in the way of its execution, I beg that you will intercede with all your might with Pope Clement, and induce him to allow my dower to be disposed of as I have written there. You will also cause two hundred masses to be celebrated for the relief of my soul, a hundred of them before my burial, and a hundred afterwards : to such a purpose may it please you to receive these forty-five ducats, which I have with me now, and for the remainder, which you may need, please to have recourse to Sir Francesco Scartesio, my attorney, who will give it to you. I desire that Andrea, Ludovico, and Ascanio, soldiers, who, during my imprisonment, have had charitable feelings towards me, may be recompensed largely, so that they may learn that pity exerted towards the unfortunate, as it always receives its reward in the other world, sometimes finds it in this also ; and may thus induce them to continue still to use it to those who may succeed me in this place of sorrow. Cause also to be paid back to Sir Carlo da Bertinaro forty ducats, which he lent me. To Virginia, who has served me with sisterly affection, and has comforted me in my saddest days of trial, beside all that which I leave her in my will, let her have all my linens, woollen and silk clothes, and the gold ornaments, which will be found in this prison. But where is Virginia ? What is she doing, that I see her not ?" And she cast her eyes around, but not seeing her she continued :

" Unhappy girl ! She had not the courage to contemplate what I am destined to suffer. Poor girl ! indeed worthy that heaven should give her either another soul or another station ! I know

not whether I ought to desire to see her again ; but in case I should not, salute her tenderly for me, and tell her that I hope to meet her in heaven, where all the angels are equal, and draw one origin, holy and immediate, from the most High God. When," and she placed her hand upon her breast, "when this heart shall have ceased to beat, you will bury me in the Church of St. Pietro in Montorio ; there the sun, rising from the summit of Montecavi, sheds its first beams ; and although the dead do not feel its warmth or see its light, yet it is consoling in the hour of death to know that your tomb will be visited by the light of heaven. Upon the same hill, farther towards the sea, four years ago they buried Torquato Tasso. In St. Pietro in Montorio is the Transfiguration, the last picture of Raphael, which death prevented him from finishing. I may well compare myself with them, for they were great in fame and misfortune ; and I, though not by genius, am still the greatest in misfortune. When time shall have worn out the pictures of Raphael, and caused the verses of Tasso to be forgotten, our names will not be forgotten by the power of love, and every heart deprived of happiness shall wander over these hills, as in a pilgrimage of passion. Raphael, in the manner of the ancient Acis, immature and glorious, was sunk beneath the waves of love ; Tasso was repelled as an enemy from the haughty heart of a regal lady, of whose existence we would have been ignorant, without this repulse. For me, a bitterer misfortune !—love, instead of wounding my breast with his darts, which poets call golden, has fallen on my shoulders like a traitor armed with an axe. But it matters not, these are woman's words ; pardon me for them. Do not think that I speak them for regret : no, for mark, if to gain it now it were only necessary for me to turn back, I would not do so. And now, while I go to commune with God, grant dearest brothers in Christ, that I may confide in the assistance of your prayers."

Lady Lucrezia, imitating the example of her daughter-in-law,



disposed also of several things in masses for her soul, no less than for her relatives, as one reads in the extract of the *Journal of the brotherhood of St. John, beheaded in Rome*.

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Prospero Farinaccio was sleeping most profoundly, pleased by gay images of triumphs, honors, and riches ; and all this pyramid of rose-colored visions appeared to him crowned by a magnificent cardinal's hat which he, jokingly, placed upon the light tresses of a woman, whose countenance resembled that of Beatrice. Suddenly he was awaked by the noise of a glass broken by the throwing of a stone against the window of his chamber. At the same time a mournful voice cried from the street below :

“ Why do you delay ? why do you delay ? While you sleep, all the Cencis are led to death ! ”

He sprang from the bed and threw open the window. The dawn had scarcely broken ; he strained his eyes ; but could not perceive any one ; the voice in the distance kept repeating the sad exclamation.

“ All the Cencis are dragged to the scaffold ; and you sleep ? ”

He dressed himself hurriedly ; got into a carriage, and hastening to the prison of Corte Savella, heard the news confirmed : he reëntered the carriage, and hurried to the Quirinal palace. Breathless, he ascended the stairs two or three at a time, and reached the ante-chamber of the Pope. Having arrived there, he asked the chamberlains with anxiety to procure him access to the High Pontiff on most urgent business : it was a matter of life and death : and for the love of God to do it quickly.

A chamberlain very leisurely taking him by the arm, and hold-

ing him firmly before him with a jesting tone, but perfectly polite, said to him.

“ Dear Sir Advocate, you must know that His Holiness still sleeps.”

“ But I know that the Holy Father rises very early.”

At this another chamberlain, seizing Farinaccio by the left arm, caused him to turn towards the left, saying :

“ But be assured, my dear sir, that the Pope sleeps yet.”

A third chamberlain, in his turn, pressing Farinaccio by the other arm, turned him to the right, saying :

“ You must understand, most worthy Sir Advocate, that His Holiness wishes to sleep—for he has not closed his eyes all night.”

In this manner was Farinaccio turned now by this one, and now by that, until he found that he had described a perfect circle round the room, and except having drawn forth plenty of soft words, he had not obtained what he wanted. Such was the custom *then* in the Court of Rome, and even at the present time I believe they act thus. Fortune, as if wishing to give the lie to these new Pharisees, caused the cup-bearer of the Pope to appear in the ante-chamber at this moment with a smoking cup of chocolate for his master, and he passed directly across the room to go and give it to him.

The chamberlains, in order not to have their assertions denied, signed to him to stop ; but he said artlessly,

“ I do not understand you ; before, you called me as if the end of the world had come, that I should carry the chocolate to His Holiness, who has been up some time, and now you wish me to stop.”

“ You are crazy ; we have not heard his bell ring. His Holiness certainly sleeps.”

“ If you, who are so near, have not heard it, how comes it

that I heard it from a distance ? You are like those, of whom the Gospel says, *habent aures, et non audiunt.*"

At this moment, they heard the bell, as if it were rung by a person out of patience with waiting.

"I told you so !—Room, I say," continued the cup-bearer, for His Holiness gets into a passion easily, and I shall have to take it first."

And he pushed aside the chamberlain in order to pass on. Farinaccio then readily imitating his example, in spite of his opposition took the tray from his hands, opened the door, and walked boldly into the chamber of the Pontiff. The cup-bearer was about to cry "stop thief !" But thinking a robber would not have sufficient boldness to enter there, much less to take refuge in the very room of the Pontiff, astonished, he kept still ; and the Pope himself made a motion with his hand that he should leave.

Farinaccio, placing the tray upon the table, knelt at the feet of Pope Clement saying :

"Let it not be ascribed to me as a fault, most Blessed Father, I beg you on my knees, that I have assumed the part, most honorable for me, that of the humblest of your servants."

"Rise."

"Ah, no ! Your Holiness ; leave me thus with my head in the dust, for such ought to be the attitude of a disconsolate man who supplicates : great sorrow now oppresses me."

He expected the Pope would interrogate him concerning the cause of his coming, intending to discover from the tone of his voice, what might be hoped or feared from him ; but the priest stood as silent and impenetrable as a sphinx of granite ; so that Farinaccio had to continue in the most piteous voice :

"A cry, I swear it on the faith of a Christian, a mournful cry awoke me, calling loudly : 'Miserable man ! do you sleep, while all the Cenci family are being dragged to the scaffold ?' I

could not say, most Holy Father, whether this voice came from heaven, or from a spirit of darkness."

"Why do you fear that it came from the Evil One ! Truth does not dwell in the mouth of the devil."

"Ah ! then the voice was really true ? Ah ! pardon, pardon, Your Holiness, for so much innocent blood, which is going to be shed. Rome has never seen, since its foundation, such a frightful tragedy."

"How innocent ? Have they not all confessed the committed crime ?"

"*Mea culpa*," pursued Farinaccio, striking his breast with his closed fist ; "*mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. God has wished to humble me. God has wished to give me cause to weep, until, like St. Peter, tears have made furrows down my cheeks. The wisdom of a man presumptuous in his science, compared to the intellect of love in a maiden, has proved to be a folly, and a snare of death. It was I, Your Holiness, who persuaded the gentle girl, Beatrice Cenci, to confess herself, although most innocent, guilty of the parricide : she was ready and disposed to die amidst tortures in witness of the truth ; it was I who drew her from her purpose ; I who promised that, by inculpating herself and excusing the others, she would easily procure safety for herself and them : to them as being innocent of parricide ; to herself, as being forced by extreme necessity to defend herself from violence. She refused ; she maintained that the best defence for innocence consisted in telling the truth, and nothing but the truth. Oh, holiest words inspired by God ! But I conjured her, I forced her with tears in my eyes ; I endeavored to move her by domestic affections, by the generosity of the sacrifice, by the virtue of charity ; and I, and her relatives, kneeling around the bed where she lay with her bones broken, and her flesh torn by the cruelty of the tortures which she had suffered, extending our hands in supplication until, conquered in spite of herself, and notwith-

standing her presentiments, she promised to confess herself guilty in the way she has done, and in the manner which I dictated to the betrayed girl. Pardon, then, Holy Father, pity. Oh if she were to die thus for my fault, my desolate soul would despair of its eternal safety."

"Do not be disheartened about that ; we will easily find a way to send you to heaven."

"And who will save me from my conscience?"

"Your own conscience!"

These words, uttered with an unspeakable sense of scorn, fell upon the head of Farinaccio like a flame of infernal fire : he raised his eyes to fix them on the countenance of the Pope, but his face appeared like stone.

"My conscience," replied Farinaccio dejected, "tells me that I shall have no more peace."

"You shall have it, believe me ; I understand these things, you shall have it. Most worthy Sir Counsellor, I know you for a man of much perspicacity, and noted in your profession. You, and in this I only give you the deserved praise, fulfilled your noble office with zeal and perseverance, which could hardly be equalled, never surpassed. Now, since you know so well how to perform your own duty, suffer in peace others to do theirs."

"And for this very reason, Holy Father, because not only the sentiment of your duty, but affection and the necessity of your elevated nature urge you to justice, I have made bold enough to explain to you all this, and warn you to be careful lest you commit an error, which may cause an eternal stain upon your name."

"We have respected in you" (and here the voice of the Pope sounded somewhat threatening) "the office of Advocate ; now respect in us that of judge."

Farinaccio, still at the feet of the Pontiff, looked like one of those Israelites, who at the foot of Mount Sinai waited in expect-

tation for the word of God, and, like them, he heard the words pronounced over his head, amid thunder and lightning. However he did not give himself up for lost yet, and making a desperate effort he said :

“Where justice does not, let mercy reach !”

“They *must* die !” concluded the Pontiff shortly, and with his foot he pressed his velvet cushion.

“*Must* !” exclaimed Farinaccio, springing to his feet. “Ah ! if they *must*, then the affair wears a different aspect. Pardon me, most Holy Father, if I was ignorant of such a necessity, and grant me to go away with death in my heart.”

The Pope perceived that he had said too much, and saw that it was necessary to amend, as well as he could, his incautious words.

“Yes ;—certainly, in spite of myself,—they *must*. The genius of the people, the fame of Rome, the security of the citizens, the religion of the Papal Mantle command me to shut my ears to mercy.”

“Do they command that all should die on a wheel, and quartered ?”

“You, as a man of much learning, know, Sir Counsellor, that the Egyptians condemned the parricidal son to be pierced by a number of sharp sticks, and then burned upon a pile of thorns ; the father who killed the son, to look for three successive days at the corpse of the slain. Here in Rome, in the early times of paganism, no laws against parricides were known : the malice of men however increased afterwards to such a degree as to commit such excesses, that the horrible punishment of the Pompeian law appeared mild to punish it. In our times, be pleased to turn your eyes towards the kingdoms of Spain, France and England, and you will not find any milder punishments. If we cut off the head of the man who committed homicide, reason wills that there should be a difference of punishment between



him and the parricide. Nevertheless to favor you, we will absolve the women from the tortures and quarterings ; but the decapitation must be executed."

" Even the child must be beheaded ?"

" What child ?"

" Bernardino Cenci, Holy Father ; you know he has scarcely reached his twelfth year, and yet ought he to undergo the punishment of a parricide ? I hardly defended him, thinking that the best advocate for him would be the date of his birth ; and I have been deceived."

" But did he not also confess that he participated in the crime ?"

" He confessed, certainly, he did confess ; but at his age can he know what parricide is, and what matters confession ? Did he not confess in order that the tortures might cease, and by the promise that he should be saved ? Holy Father ! for once listen to the voice of your heart, which persuades you to mercy ; give ear to it : for one day we all shall have need of mercy."

" You make me have a scruple about Bernardino Cenci."

And the Pope bent his head meditating. After he had remained some time in this posture he continued :

" Generally wickedness does not outgrow age ; sometimes it does, and we read examples of this ; nor does age save one from the most atrocious crimes—on this question, however, I have some scruples, and I would wish to be able to satisfy you, most worthy Sir Farinaccio ; in order that you may not go away discouraged, but rather that you may be convinced of the great esteem we have of you, we intend, and we will grant the life of Bernardino Cenci. Now go in peace, and leave us to finish and send the *placet* speedily, in order that it may not arrive too late. Now you see, Sir Farinaccio, that it is not our fault if you do not call yourself contented. Go in peace."

Farinaccio thought his case much like that of the patriarch

Jacob, when his treacherous sons placed in his hands the bloody garment of Joseph, and he was obliged to say to them—thanks ! He departed with a broken heart, and the crafty priest had presumed to make him believe that he had affected him. With head bent down, and hoarse voice, he returned thanks to the Pontiff for his complaisance, while the latter, with an appearance of affectionate eagerness, repeated to him :

“ Now we will send the *placet* immediately, and we authorize you to announce it openly that we have granted it for the merits of your lordship.”

“ *Ex ore leonis*,” murmured Farinaccio, descending from the Quirinal palace—“ our ancestors used to consecrate to the gods the remains of the lamb snatched from the wolf’s mouth.”

So he thought then ; but more so afterwards, when he understood what kind of pardon Pope Clement had granted to the little Bernardino. Yet, with the flight of time, with hearing it repeated to him everywhere, and by receiving most sincere thanks, not only from others, but from Bernardino himself, and finding it for his own interest to believe thus, he ended by believing truly that he had snatched this child from death. His light loves, the alternate change of luck in gambling, and low pleasures first softened, then rendered wholly blunt the sense of sorrow. The wealth which he received from the office of Counsellor, the great credit which he enjoyed in the court, persuaded him afterwards to abstain from the defence of the Cencis for the reacquirement of the entails confiscated in benefit of the Apostolic Chamber. He excused himself by saying, that he had done enough—now others should try—also that Jesus Christ had called the Cyrean to aid him to bear the weight of the cross.

These and other things he said with the semblance of truth, but they were false. The only truth was the atrocious presage of the sceptred priest, who, when Prospero Farinaccio asked him, who would save him from his conscience, had replied :  
“ *Your own conscience !*”

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WIFE.

*Mulier diligens est corona viro suo.*

PROVERB.

BUT love did not sleep. Guido had had means of knowing the fatal sentence when scarcely signed. Not expecting it so soon, he was surprised ; his soul did not despair, however, and, having recourse to his new friends the banditti, he urgently prayed them, even ordered them (for his authority over them increased daily), that disguising themselves in various ways they should assemble without delay in the Flavian amphitheatre.

Two hours before dawn the bandits began to collect together in groups, some dressed as abbots, others as friars, some in their country clothes, and others as gentlemen ; showing the falsity of the proverb, "The tunic does not make the monk," for no one could have distinguished them from true gentlemen cleanly washed and shaved. But, on counting them, they were found to amount to only forty, too small a number for so hazardous an undertaking. But Guido and the rest were men not easily discouraged from so great a risk—Guido himself would have rushed into this danger alone. All opinions having been heard, Guido commanded that all should put sprigs of grape leaves in their hats or hoods as a sign, and provided with arms, should attack the procession as it approached the scaffold. Having there got free of the brotherhood of Mercy, the constables and the soldiers, they should seize upon Beatrice and transport her

to a place where he would be, mounted upon a swift horse, and would carry her behind him beyond the walls of the city ; they profiting by the tumult, should disband, and endeavor to reach Tivoli, where he would await them. The bandits agreed to this arrangement with their whole hearts, for not only by nature were they willing to undertake such bold deeds, but knowing the compassion all Rome felt for Beatrice, they trusted to gain great renown, of which they were desirous ; and lastly, the promised reward, if they should succeed in saving the girl, was Cæsar like, as they had occasion to say many times afterwards.

A wonderful thing ! yet mentioned in the records of that time—a little while after, in Rome itself, others meditated the same design ! It was believed that these were secretly urged by Cardinal Maffeo Barberini and some of his friends—perhaps it was not true, but he manifested great solicitude in the affair. Beatrice's fate and her great beauty had deeply moved him. The care he took to procure her portrait, of which I shall speak by and by, and the permission he obtained of rendering due honors to the corpse of the noble girl, showed it too plainly. It might have been his innate goodness, for he was highly versed in the fine arts and literature, and a poet of some merit ; it might have been strong friendship for Guido, and it might have been love for Beatrice, for neither the purple robe of a Cardinal, nor respect for a friend, can prevent love from entering the breasts of men, but they can, and sometimes do prevent its breaking the bounds of honesty.

If Guido could have had his forces united with those of Cardinal Maffeo, the plan might have succeeded ; but thinking he had already trespassed too much on his friend, he did not wish, with unreasonable imprudence, to involve him in an undertaking so difficult and fraught with danger.

This other conspiracy to save Beatrice was composed of artists, who, although accustomed to delineate physical beauty

alone, by that secret bond of relationship which unites all good and beautiful things, are easily enamored of moral beauty. When your eye grows weary of the everlasting view of human depravity, turn it upon artists, particularly upon the young, and there it will rest. As leaders to this company were many intimate friends of the most noble families in Rome, secretly sent by their patrons, who felt as if receiving a great wrong themselves in this Cencian slaughter. Among many others, the history of the times relates how Ubaldino Ubaldini, a young Florentine artist of great expectations, who would have attained great fame if death had not unfortunately closed his career, was roused almost to madness : he was the painter who sketched the head of Beatrice, as hopeless love had pictured her face upon his heart, at the very moment she was led to the scaffold. Guido Reni had not yet moved from Bologna, his native place, to Rome : he went there towards the end of the year 1599, or the beginning of the year 1600, as is proved in his life published in the *Felsina pittrice*. Tradition says that Guido painted the portrait of Beatrice on the eve of her death ; but, as it is erroneous, it should be corrected ; for if true, it would stain the reputation of the girl as well as the painter. Upon Beatrice it would lay the blame of vanity, since her soul in those last solemn moments should have been, as it truly was, absorbed in thoughts of God, and the purest affections. It would have shown that Guido possessed an unfeeling or hard heart to have been able, without trembling, to paint this unfortunate, lovely girl, ready to be dragged to an unmerited death. This picture, painted by Guido, is now preserved in the palace of the Princes Barberini at Rome, and the frame is carved by Volpato, and better still by Morghen.

The design of these conspirators was also to rush upon the procession, seize Beatrice, and the other condemned, put them in a carriage drawn by powerful horses, and transport them to the sea. These surpassed the companions of Guido in number,



but were surpassed by them in valor, for the latter were accustomed to mix in the bloodiest frays. A white tassel upon the head was their badge. Ubaldini was to hold the door of the carriage ready, the reins being held by a certain French artist, who had boasted he could drive the Sun's chariot without danger of plunging into the Po.

"*Per Dio !*" cried Ubaldini, striking the table heavily with his fist, "she must not die—she must not die—it would be better"——

As he hesitated, a companion said :

"What would be better ?"

"To break the Apollo Belvidere or the Laocoön."

"And the cupola of the Vatican, too," added a third.

"Much better, for we can rebuild these things," observed the Frenchman who had offered to enact the part of Automedon ; but Ubaldini looking askance at him, said between anger and laughter :

"No, Frenchman, true son of France ! these things *cannot* be rebuilt, but better they should perish than an innocent creature."

"Oh, priests !" exclaimed a young artist, and stopped. Then after having waited a short time, as if seeking some suitable epithet, he added : "Oh, priests, priests ! For I have said all, to say more would not define you better ; you wish to assassinate our models. Take them from us, what will remain for us to study in order to gain honor ? You, perhaps ? Ah ! one cannot paint the Ark of Noah every day upon the walls of some burial ground."

"Ah ! it would have been fortunate for Beatrice if she had been born in your station ! Then she would not have been in this cruel condition to which they have reduced her."

"What has that to do with it ?"

"A great deal, for they say they kill her to get her money."



Now from you they might get your teeth : but as for crowns, it would be lost time."

" Silence, all of you ! Remember that the beauty, which we admire, is not that of a courtesan, but the purest and most celestial of all beauty ; hence, in order that it may descend upon our hearts, like the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and infuse a virtue into them to act magnanimously, we must keep them pure with grave and holy meditations."

This speech, delivered by young Ubaldini mounted upon the step of the carriage, in a moment cut short these repartees, and all these noisy, joking artists became as serious as the fathers of the council of Trent.

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The sun's first rays peeping over the hills of Rome fell in the prison of Torre di Nona upon a sorrowful sight. Giacomo and Bernardino having met, ran to embrace each other : in order to mingle their tears and kisses together, they had come within each other's chains, and were mutually encircled with arms and chains.

" Come, dear one, embrace me, I feel as if embracing my own children. You are happy, Bernardino, in not having children ! You do not feel more than half the anguish of death."

" But have I not nephews ?"

" Alas ! my children—orphans—children of a parricide, pursued by a cruel man who can do all he wishes, and who wants their patrimony ! Every one, to please the powerful, conceals his own baseness under the semblance of holy abomination, and hunts down the unfortunate. Where are their friends ? they have become enemies, and will make the children bear the shame of their acquaintance with the father. They will take the bread from their famishing mouths : who will defend them ? They will beat them, and they will cry, and to make them quiet they

will beat them again. Their mother, ill-used like them, will be ashamed that her bosom has become a nest for vipers.—Ah ! no, no, Luisa, my Luisa will never abandon my children, and when milk fails her, she will nourish them on her blood.”

“Poor little children ! And will they deprive them of all their own property ? And take away my estates also ? But I know nothing about these wicked affairs, and so I told the father confessor a short time ago, but he would not believe it. He obstinately insisted : but ‘no,’ I firmly called out—until they came and took me away.”

“Who knows better than I, my brother, that you are wholly innocent ? You at least have one consolation, that you will pass from this life to heavenly joys. As for me, I doubt whether that will be granted to me ; for although I had no part in the death of Count Cenci, still I must acknowledge the crime of having at another time conspired against his life, and consented to his death.”

“And yet we confessed we stabbed him ourselves ! I murder the man, only the sight of whom made me tremble ? But, although I am a boy, I saw well enough, that on denying it, they would kill us with a thousand tortures ; so, by confessing, we should gain something, death at one blow. Tell me, brother, you who have lived longer in the world, is justice always thus ?”

Giacomo replied only with sighs ; the boy listening, said :

“Hear ! Giacomo, hear ! what bell is that which sounds over our heads ?”

Giacomo pressing Bernardino more closely to his bosom, asked sadly :

“How do you feel, Bernardino ?”

“I ? Very well.”

“And are you not sorry to die ?”

“Yes, because I love the birds, the butterflies, and the flowers among which they fly, and I love to see the Tiber flow when it is swollen ;—I love everything. Here I can welcome the sun, which

is bright and warm ; and there beyond it, I feel that all is dark and cold. Here, I know where I am ; but there, where I am going, although they tell me, and it may be so, still I am not sure of it."

"Now listen ; that bell knells the last hour for us, who are full of life. That bell proclaims that we must depart, we who wish to stay."

As if in confirmation of his sad words, the confessors and brothers of mercy appeared at the door.

"Come ; courage, brothers, the hour draws nigh ;" said a mournful voice.

"God's will be done !" replied Giacomo ;—but Bernardino said :

"And is this God's will, Giacomo ?"

"Yes, certainly ; for nothing happens without God's consent ; and you sin grievously by doubting it," replied a confessor, instead of Giacomo.

"If it be so, father, I repent ; and also to gain favor in Heaven, I will believe that I, although most innocent, am sent to my death by the will of God."

"Who of us are sinless ? we are all guilty in the eyes of God."

"But all are not dragged to death at the age of twelve."

"God chasteneth whom he loveth ; and you, my son, should thank him with your whole heart for having chosen you from among a thousand to profit by his infinite goodness.

"Father," replied the boy, with simplicity, "if you would like to take my place"—

And the friar, as if remorsefully, raised his hands and eyes to heaven, saying :

"With all my heart, my son, if it could be done ; but it cannot."

Master Alessandro, with his iron visage, cut short the delay. It seemed impossible, yet he showed in his face great sorrow,—

savage—threatening to those whom fortune had thrown into his hands ; but yet sorrowful. He wrapped the condemned in two black cloaks furnished by the brotherhood of mercy ; the very one on the back of Giacomo formerly belonged to Count Cenci, who had once been enrolled in that holy institution.

All with slow steps passed out of the prison. Giacomo stopped upon the threshold of the room he was leaving, witness of inexpressible agonies, and uttered these words :

“ Seventy and seven times accursed be the man, who condemned another man to despair within this living tomb ; let him who with only one blow hurries him to his grave, be only seven times accurst.”

The bells still continued to peal a dirge for the dying. The drum sounded discordantly ; it seemed as if heaven and earth exchanged in these sounds the news of the slaughter about to be fulfilled, and were stupefied by it. In the courtyard below, several troops of cavalry stood ready, a crowd of constables on foot, the brothers of mercy, the executioner and his assistants, and in short all the miserable preparations of power, with which justice must surround herself, when she is not justice.

Bernardino looked at all these preparations in a bewildered manner, but more particularly did he notice two carts, within which were furnaces of burning coal with iron pincers heating ; and with boyish curiosity he asked :

“ Giacomo, what are those pincers for ?”

Giacomo, did not reply, and many of the friars wept beneath their cowls ; but the boy again inquired :

“ I want to know ; come, tell me, Giacomo ; you will not frighten me in the least, since I know I must die.”

“ They are for us ;” replied Giacomo, and he could say no more.

“ Oh ! I did not think so many implements were necessary for me, it will be short work with me, you see, I have a neck as

slender as a reed, I do not think the executioner will labor very hard."

He then saw a nail, a hammer, and a *red mantle embroidered with gold*, all which objects, as being instruments of the crime, were borne upon one of the carts to be exposed to the public.

"Giacomo, is not that red mantle the one our father used to wear? This red mantle seems to haunt us."

The comforters, in order to prevent the mind of the boy from wandering from religious thoughts, put upon him, as also on his brother, what was called the *tavolette*, a kind of wooden box in which the heads of the prisoners were inclosed, obliging their eyes to rest upon the image of the crucifix, and certain holy prayers made for these occasions by a learned and pious Capuchin, and pasted upon the sides. The boy shrieked, and cried out for them to remove this encumbrance, and not take from him what God alone could give, the sight of heaven.

Just then there was a movement among the people at the door of the courtyard, a stir among the soldiery, and a carriage was seen slowly moving in the midst. The voice of the crowd resounded noisily against the prison walls, like the waves of the sea in a tempest.

"Pardon ! pardon !"

A thrill of life shone from the eyes of Giacomo, and his head arose, like the poplar trees which the storm had bent. The noble Sir Ventura descended from the carriage, and standing opposite the prisoners, drew a paper from his bosom and read :

"Don Bernardino Cenci, our lord grants you your life. *Be pleased, however, to accompany your relatives, and pray to God for their souls.\**

*Be pleased.* Reader, mark these words, and prepare to see what is the pity of priests. Even the devil, bred in the college

\* These were the precise words, as preserved in the chronicle of the times.

of the reverend Fathers of the Company of Jesus, would not have known or wished to use words so satanically mocking, and hypocritically cruel.

The comforters then took off the *tavolette* from Bernardino's head ; and the executioner having read the *placet* of the Pope, freed him from his handcuffs, and not knowing what to cover him with to remove him from the appearance of being condemned, he took the red mantle of Count Cenci, and wrapped him in it. Thus fate ordained, that the last sons of this wicked man, should approach the scaffold, one in the black hooded robe with which he betrayed his God, and the other in the red mantle with which he had tried to betray Marzio. Even his clothes were fatal to his family: like Nessus, he left his garments impregnated with hate.

Bernardino seeing the bright sun and feeling safe, clapped his hands, and leaped and shouted for joy, the instincts of life prevailing at this moment more powerfully than any other passion ; but he soon remembered how many causes for tears were left to him, and how base it was to exult ; he crouched low at the feet of Giacomo, and humbly begged his pardon.

In Giacomo the pallor of death had succeeded to the ray of life ; his eyes were already glassy and wild ; yet from his parched throat came out these words :

" Rejoice, my brother ; if you could see my heart, you would know it exults more than you can. The Lord begins to be merciful unto me, since he sends another father to my children. Take them to your care, for you alone can receive them. I intrust my blood to you with the same affection that I intrust my soul to my Creator."

" Giacomo," replied Bernardino, embracing his brother's knees, " I swear to make a vow of celibacy, that other loves may not prevent me from having a father's feelings towards the children you leave me."

" And now blessed be God, gentlemen, let us go."



The procession, having left the courtyard, proceeded towards Santa Maria in Posterula, where they were at that time repairing the college of the Celestini, afterwards called, from the name of the reigning Pope, Clementino. In the middle of the street of Orso the executioner unloosed the robe of Giacomo, exposing him naked even to the waist, then having taken hold of the red-hot pincers, he tore his flesh with them.

The flesh shrivelled beneath the heat of the iron ; the iron smoked, a fearfully painful wound was made, and sent forth an insupportable odor. Heart, sight, hearing, smell, were alike wounded.

Bernardino sprang furiously to his feet, and tried with his hands to seize the pincers ; but the executioner drew them back : then, seeing the uselessness of the attempt, he threw himself on his knees, and joining his hands together, prayed :

“ Oh ! for pity’s sake, do not touch him ; it is enough, too much for him—for Christ’s sake, do it also to me.”

And as Master Alessandro, not heeding, turned to renew the torture, Bernardino cried :

“ For pity’s sake, brothers of mercy, give me back the *tavolette*—that I may not see—I may not hear—oh ! oh ! it pierces my heart.”

And the boy fell into a swoon.

Giacomo compressed his lips as tightly as he could, and kept his cheeks within his teeth until his mouth was full of blood ; so as not to utter a groan. But the perspiration dropped from his forehead like rain, his hair stood on end like porcupine’s quills, he sobbed convulsively, but did not groan. Cruelly lacerated in this manner, the miserable man proceeded through the squares of Nicosia and Palomba, even to the Church of Santo Apollinare ; from whence they bent their course to Piazza Navona, anciently called Circolo Agonale, and hence through San Pantaleo, Pollacchi, and the square of Pallottole, even to Campo di

Fiore, the broker's exchange, where by a privilege those condemned by the tribunal of the Holy Office were executed.

In this manner kings, but especially Pontiffs, were once accustomed to clothe infamy with a semblance of honor, and they still do so. The world shudders, hisses, or smiles ; and they let it shudder, laugh, or hiss, and continue to create nobles out of spies, and grant indulgences and crosses of honor to traitors.

The procession now reached a burning soil ; it was the Cenci square. Giacomo, stupefied with pain, neither noticed, nor knew where he was dragged. Having arrived at the foot of the archway where the steps begin which lead to the church of San Thomas dei Cenci, such piercing cries struck upon his ears, that they had the power of overcoming the acute pain with which even his brain was seared. He raised his eyes, and as through a veil he seemed to see upon the terrace, which overlooked the arch, the outstretched arms of his wife and children. The shame of appearing in such a state of dejection and misery before his family, roused all the blood in his veins, and rushing back impetuously to his heart made him reel. But love conquered shame, and he exclaimed with an affectionate voice :

“ My children ! Oh ! my children ! Give me my children ! ”

The official charged with the execution of justice intended to go on ; but the people, touched by pity, shouted unanimously :

“ Give him his children ! ”

And as the officials hesitated to obey, a rush of people barred the procession and approached shouting to the cart ; on this account the officials, finding the desire of the people just, proclaimed with loud voice the universal wish should be granted. Therefore they let Giacomo descend from the cart, and throwing a cloak over his shoulders to conceal his wounds, led him up the steps into the courtyard of the palace. What pangs of pain

the unhappy man felt as the cloak rubbed his burnt flesh, cannot be told ; but he suppressed his groans in pity for his family.

Luisa, with her hair unbound, was seen hurrying down the broad staircase holding one little child in her arms, another by her hand. Angiolina followed leading, the other children ; and when they met Giacomo in the little square, Luisa placed the little child upon his neck, who clung to him desperately, then she tried to kneel and embrace his knees ; but at the first sound which came from Giacomo's lips her limbs failed, and, overcome with grief, she fell prostrate at his feet. Giacomo did not see her, for the child hanging about his neck prevented him : and with a voice sufficiently firm he said :

“ My children, in a short time one blow will deprive you of a father, and your mother of a husband. I leave you a sad inheritance. This thought torments me, alas ! more than my punishment. When they shall have buried me within this Church of San Tommaso, you will remember, although they may hunt you from your home, that no one can shut the door of the church, built by your ancestors, upon you. Come at night, let no one see you, and pray for the soul of your poor father. Luisa, I do not commend to you your children, and mine ; I know—I know, before reaching them it will be necessary to pass over your body. My dear Luisa, where are you ?”

Hearing no reply, he bent down, and placed his child upon the ground, for he could not use his arms. Then he saw her lying senseless at his feet, and raising his eyes to heaven, he said :

“ Lord, I thank Thee, that in having given me the satisfaction of seeing her again before I die, Thou hast taken from her the grief of this last separation.” Then, kneeling on the ground, he kissed her face, bathing it with tears and blood. He then kissed his children one by one, who pressed around him trying to retain him with their childish hands, and uttering such piteous cries, that they pierced his heart.

"Farewell—my children !" said the miserable man between his sobs ; "farewell, we shall meet again in heaven. Bernardino, remember they are your children now."

Bernardino, bewildered, kissed and embraced the little creatures, and to quiet them, promised he would soon return home. And they said :

"But will you bring papa back with you ?"

"I—no—but do not doubt, they will bring him back—farewell !"

They all wept, and sounds of moaning and sobbing were heard all around, as if each bystander had a son or brother about to be dragged to his death.

The mournful procession resumed its course.

Angiolina, left alone with the desolate Luisa, was too much overcome to be able to carry her to her chamber. Not one of the many servants, partisans, or friends of the Cenci family were there to aid her in her pious duty. Men and beasts fled from a house which nodded to its fall. She went into the street waiting there for some one to pass. At last she saw the old Hebrew Jacob, who kept a broker's shop within a short distance of the palace (for I believe I mentioned before that this palace was near the Ghetto). At first Angiolina felt a repugnance to ask help of a man who was esteemed in those times somewhat less than a dog ; but overcome by necessity, she asked him somewhat roughly to help her to carry the poor lady into the house. Jacob, by whom the haughty words and rude tone had not passed unnoticed, replied :

"Willingly, my lady. The Lord in his own way has visited this house, and all miserable people are brothers."

Jacob walking within the group of children, who were kneeling around their mother and weeping, thinking she was dead, took Luisa in his arms, consoling and assuring the children she was alive. He placed her upon the bed, put a pillow

under her head, and, standing near obsequiously, said to Angiolina :

“Born to suffer and to die, we, whom you curse, have also hearts within us. If you wish anything more of me, ask it, I pray you, that the creatures of God, divided by injustice, may at least be united in sorrow.”

Angiolina dismissed him, pressing his hand in thanks. Luisa, after a long time, came to herself ; looking around her bed, she saw her children, as once Niobe gazed on hers, pierced with the arrows of misfortune. Leaning upon her arm, slightly rising from the bed, she said with a languid voice :

“We shall never see him more ! Indeed, my children, we shall no longer have a roof to cover us :—we have lost everything in one moment ; father, relations, friends, fame, and property. Forget what you were, and remember what you are. When your father’s friends feign not to know you, do not feel insulted by it ; servants have left you, pardon them ; they are tied to their bread, and you have no bread : gentlemen’s children will be ashamed of you ; be sufficient to yourselves : the children of the people will flee from you ; bring them back to you by affection : every man’s hand will be against you, let your hand be raised against no one. Do not curse your father, for he was unfortunate, not guilty ; and even were he guilty, it is not for children to judge their own parents ! but I affirm that he was unhappy, and innocent ; therefore pray God that as he can no more come to us, we may all go to him. We are alone ; let us redouble the ties of love within us, and then we shall not see our solitude.”

Scarcely had she pronounced these sad words than she heard sobs behind her. Luisa turning round, saw Angiolina, who, kneeling at a respectful distance, had joined together the little hands of the infant, and raised them with her own towards heaven, praying and weeping. Thus the kind woman wished to in-

timate to Luisa, that every heart had not deserted her ; and that one remained who would always participate in and weep for the misfortune of her family.

Luisa understood the gentle rebuke, and calling Angiolina to her, she wound her arms about her neck, and kissing her, said :

“ Sister, I ask your pardon ;” and raising her eyes to heaven she added : “ Lord, have pity upon two desolate widows :—if thou dost not assist us, we shall not be able to bear more.”

And bowing her head she remained silent for a few minutes. Then she continued :

“ See, my children, you will not be alone : you have two beings who will love you. God takes a father from you, but sends a second mother : the last thing to be lost is hope, but in the end even that is lost ; a friend proved by misfortune is never lost.”

The women continued to weep ; but from that moment their tears flowed less bitterly.

When God from the height of heaven sees a friend cling to another in the day of sorrow, He is pleased that He created man ; and then He remembers that He created him in His own image.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE LAST HOUR.

*Il bellissimo collo al ferro offerse.*

MASINI.\*

O mia Francia! Nobil terra,  
O mio sangue di Borbon!  
Sol compiei diciassette anni,  
Nel diciotto appena son.  
Dal Re ancor non conosciuta,  
Con le vergini men vo.  
Quanto sei per te, Castiglia,  
Tradimento non ci entro!  
Le corone, che mi hai dato,  
Son di sangue e di dolor,  
Ma ne avrò sul cielo un' altra,  
Che ben fia di più valor.  
Alla fin delle parole  
Il mazzier la mazzico!  
Le cervella del bel capo  
Per la sala sparpaglio! †

THE procession which led the Cenci to the scaffold, after having passed through several streets, arrived at the end of the street Giulia, where it stopped before the prison of Corte Savella.

Beatrice and Lucrezia were meditating in silence. Father Angelico prayed; listening attentively he heard a noise, which drew nearer and nearer. He looked up, and saw a figure at the

\* Sonnet upon the death of Beatrice Cenci, at which he was present.

† The death of Donna Bianca, a Spanish ballad.

door that made him a sign with his hand, and he well understood that sign. Oh, God ! Although he had long since worn out his life in the bitter work of giving comfort to the unfortunate reduced to such a sad fate, still he had not courage enough to inform Beatrice that it was time to go. While he felt perplexed what to do, the maiden offered him means by the prayer which she was then addressing to God.

“ And if,” said she, “ this immense desire which urges me out of life into thy arms, oh Lord, is a sin, forgive me. How weary I am of waiting ! I am like an exile, who upon the sun-burnt shore hastens with his wishes the ship which is to reconduct him home. Oh, heaven, a truly happy home of all those who suffer !”

“ Daughter, if you feel so strong, the Lord is coming—he has come to take you. Let us go.”

And rising to his feet he offered his bony hand to the soft one of Beatrice, who, also rising, immediately exclaimed :

“ Here below to suffer is martyrdom ; in heaven it is glory—let us go—let us go.”

In this place, either by curiosity or pity, the people were collected in greater numbers ; who crowding the street, hardly gave room for the ill-omened procession to move. Men and children were seen perched like birds upon the cornices and seats of the windows, or huddled in the shape of grotesque figures over the projections of the walls, over the doors, and even on the iron bars which supported the lamps.

First Lady Lucrezia appeared, with her black veil wrapped round her head, and falling down to her waist, and her black robe of cotton cloth with large and open sleeves, the undersleeves of very fine linen folded in the most minute folds, and fastening at the wrist, as was then the fashion. She did not wear around her waist the white badge, which in those times widows were accustomed to wear in Rome, but a cord, within

which her arms were bound ; not so tight, however, as to prevent her from raising to her eyes a crucifix, and with her left hand to wipe the perspiration which dripped from her brow : she wore slippers of black velvet, with large bows of silk of the same color.

Long suffering had not been able to wither the divine beauty of Beatrice. Like a light nearly extinguished, she seemed to have gathered all her splendor to sparkle more brilliantly. Suffering had sprinkled her with the dew which drips in heaven from the palms of martyrs : she was still upon the earth, but like an angel spreading her wings to take flight to the throne of God. Beatrice was dressed somewhat differently from her mother-in-law : her veil was white ; over her shoulders she had a silver tissue robe ; her dress was of a taffety of a violet color ; and her high heeled shoes were of white velvet with large tassels, the laces and heels of a crimson color.

“ Here she is ! here she is ! ” Like lightning this word ran from mouth to mouth ; and, as if they had neither heart nor eyes except for her, they all looked immediately upon Beatrice.

As soon as she put her foot out of the door, the crucifix of the Brothers of Mercy, wrapt half-way down in a long black veil, was blown by the wind, and seemed like a sail puffed by a propitious breeze for the departure.

The crucifix bowed before her as if to salute her, and both ladies knelt down. Beatrice praying with a loud voice said :

“ Since thou comest towards me with open arms, be pleased, oh Christ my Redeemer, to receive me with the same desire with which I come towards thee.”

Giacomo and Bernardino, having seen from the top of their carts the beautiful innocent girl, with remorse in their consciences for having induced her to confess herself guilty for the sake of saving them from death, they seemed to themselves the cause of her execution, and urged by the same desire, rushed

down from the cart before any were able to prevent them, and, throwing themselves at her feet, exclaimed :

“ Pardon! pardon, sister ; you go to death innocently on our account !”

Beatrice seeing the shocking laceration of her brother's flesh, shuddered, and supported herself upon the arm of the father capuchin ; but soon regaining her courage, with serene aspect she replied :

“ What have I to forgive you, my brothers ? Neither mine, nor your confession sends us to death, but *our property* ; and you ought to have known this before. For what should I then forgive you ? Because you have caused me to abandon this forest full of wild beasts with human faces ? But I am impatient to go out from it. For I go where there are neither oppressors nor oppressed ? But if this could happen now, it would not seem to me quick enough. Come then, courage, Giacomo ; now they may torture you much, but only for a short time. Why do we delay here ? Let us hasten to gain the bosom of the Consoler, who awaits us—in eternal peace—in peace !”

Encouraged by this new comfort, which the wonderful courage of the maiden infused into their souls, they reascended the cart, and courageously endured the continuance of the torture.

Beatrice walked light and fast, as a person desirous of reaching in time the place of appointment ; and passing before the churches which were in great numbers all along the road, she knelt and prayed with such fervid prayers, that those who heard her said, that never had they felt such a painful compassion in their hearts, and desired that God would grant them on their death-beds, to go from this life with as much faith and joy as hers.

One of the hooded Brothers of Mercy, however, seemed to feel great uneasiness at the frequent protestations proclaimed by

Beatrice of her innocence, and with the shaking of his head, and the unquiet movements of his person shamefully manifested it. Finally, as he was one of the comforters, who walked by the side of Beatrice, he carried his impudence so far as to whisper in her ear :

“But whom do you think to deceive, by calling yourself innocent with so much obstinacy? You were not able to deceive human justice, do you imagine to succeed better with the divine?”

Beatrice felt the insult deeply, but now, as nothing earthly could affect her, instead of resenting it, she with calm voice replied :

“And because I speak to God, from whom nothing is hidden, I speak words of truth.”

“But you confessed without torture.”

“Thus they persuaded me to do for the safety of my relatives ; and if this confession has been the cause of my death, I repent of it as a heavy sin ; but our death was decreed long before the process. We were consigned to the hands of the judges not that they might judge us, but murder us ; it would have been far better to have consigned us to the hands of the executioner at once, without losing so much time and expense.”

“No, you are guilty ; and I tell you that the gate of heaven will be shut upon you, unless humbling yourself you confirm your confession before the people.”

“Are these the comforts with which you console me? The tortures of Luciani are to commence again? The safety of my soul does not depend upon you, nor upon any other mortal upon the earth. Be silent.”

“No, I will not be silent. You are guilty, you should proclaim yourself guilty of parricide.”

At this moment a vase of flowers falling from a balcony, either purposely or by accident, fell upon the shoulder of the

hooded brother, the blow knocked him headlong on the ground moaning with pain. The brothers rushed to raise him, and taking away his hood, found him to be Giovanni Aldobrandino, nephew of the Pope. His relatives had sent him not as a comforter, but as a witness of the execution. It was accomplished, but he saw it not.

From the street St. Paolino the procession came out at last upon the square of the Castle St. Angiolo, otherwise called the tomb of Adrian. The pagan funeral rites were abolished by Christ, and nevertheless His priests continue to sacrifice upon this sepulchre victims of slaves, who intend to free themselves from servitude. One day the victim will sacrifice the priest, but the God shall remain untouched !

In the midst of the square arose the scaffold, and here upon a board was a block ; upon the block an axe. The rays of the declining sun shone upon the polished iron, which gleamed like fire ; the eyes of those who looked were dazzled. The dense crowd waved like a field of ripe wheat blown by the winds ; by this motion might be understood that the storm was there, but at that moment it was silent. When the procession had reached near the chapel of St. Celso, where the Host was exposed (last station of the condemned who, praying within, were to wait to be taken one by one to the execution), this mass of people began to be heated, and to boil like liquefied metal to cast a bell or cannon ; for the instruments of death and of piety are wrought by men with the same metal !—From on high the people were seen to fly from this side and that, and to push here and there ; so that the motion extended to a great distance.

A band of men, distinguished by vine leaves in their hats, advanced close together and silently, thrusting their poniards right and left. It would be impossible to describe with words the great fear which spread around, the confusion, the loud and desperate noise. The esquires tried to rush upon them with



their horses, but they, being frightened, shied ; the officers, knowing very well what a load of hatred weighed upon their heads, thought only of saving themselves. The Brothers of Mercy, priests, torches, crucifix, flags, every thing went topsy-turvy.

Master Alessandro, standing upon the cart, kept under his hands Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci, like a falcon who grasps two birds in his claws. Wonderful were the attitudes and expressions of passion, both by men and women, from the roofs, from the balconies and platforms; pitiful cries resounded from the people pushed hither and thither in the square : some, either by being trampled upon or stifled died, and several, either by fright or the heat of the sun, or both these causes, lost their senses. To add to the confusion, several scaffolds, having been raised in the hurry, and because overcrowded with people, broke down amid the terrible tumult; and of those beneath one had his head, another his leg, another his arm broken, and not one remained without some bruise.

Guido upon his fiery horse, saw these things and felt impatient for the consummation. Behold, his companions moving, approach Beatrice ; behold, the last obstacle is removed ; now they take her—they have taken her, they lift her up, and carry her away. She is safe ! The people burst forth into a great cry of joy : they also crowd over behind the assailants, and if they had not entangled themselves in their own movements they might have helped them better.

Guido, not being able to restrain himself, extended his arms, as if he wished to shorten the space which separated him from his Beatrice. As chance willed, in his hasty movement he pressed the spurs into his young horse, who already frightened by so much confusion, shied ; and as if this had not been enough to excite him, a scaffold which stood before him suddenly broke down with a tremendous noise, where the same unfortunate accidents as before were renewed. The horse then, with ungovern-

ble fury, threw off his reins, and leaped like a thunderbolt ; and breaking through the crowd, biting and trampling, transported the unfortunate lover with him at his mercy.

In spite of this accident the companions of Guido would have saved Beatrice, as they were not people to lose courage soon, and taking possession of the first carriage they happened to meet, they would have striven to carry her away in it ; but the obstruction came from another side ; it was fatal for Beatrice that the affection of men should be more injurious to her than their hatred.

The people, rippling like the water which breaks on the rocks, turned back impetuously, pushed by a band of armed men distinguished by a white tassel in the hat ; these also were in earnest, for they managed their swords so well as to cut off the heads or drive from side to side whomsoever stood in their way.

Beatrice, in the midst of this struggle, seemed like a little boat in the middle of the sea in a tempest. Now she would appear over the wave of the heads of the people, now disappear, now advance, now draw back ;—one step towards flight, one step towards the scaffold.

The young Ubaldini from the door of the carriage prepared to receive Beatrice saw all, and observed that others were striving to save her, and through want of concord, instead of aiding, impeded each other to the manifest ruin of the enterprise. Afraid of the imminent danger, he rushed down to warn his companions to stop from advancing any farther ; rather to turn back, if they did not wish to lose Beatrice. But the good young man, between the confusion and cries, was not able to make himself understood by any, and the few that heard him, not knowing what he desired, and seeing him deserting his place, thought the undertaking to be a desperate one, and were disheartened.

In the meanwhile the scattered horsemen, availing themselves

of the clear ground, gathered together, and the officers behind them. The squadron having formed again, the captain ordered them to charge; which succeeded very easily, as they were assaulting a disordered crowd. Young Ubaldini, as love counselled him, struggled all alone to oppose the charging horses, and thrust his sword even to the hilt in the first that came before him; but the others passing by gave him two blows, one of which cut his head, another the shoulder, so that he fell for dead upon the ground. The foot soldiers having formed themselves into a square, presented a mass impossible to be broken. In this manner, threatened from behind and assaulted in front, there remained no alternative for the companions of Guido except to save themselves by the sides, which they did with incredible swiftness when they knew the undertaking to be ruined. Beatrice, like the little boat which after having been tossed about a long time is thrown by the increasing storm to break upon the rocks, by the diverse and contrary movements of her own defenders, was dragged to the very foot of the scaffold.

What was in her heart in the midst of these vicissitudes? Did Beatrice reopen her bosom to hope? Did she nurse the fond idea of life? Did love smile upon her? Love did smile; but still she no more desired life. Too far had she gone in the road of the grave to wish to return, and begin again; for all which she had said about dying had really come from her heart. She now was overwhelmed, I will not say by a craving, but by a sincere desire to rest her head in the bosom of God: and notwithstanding this, love smiled upon her, for even upon the edge of the tomb, human creatures, especially women, are pleased to know themselves loved. They err when they sculpture Love as tearful over the tomb of a loved maiden: Love descends into it together with her, and dwells in it; for even the bones themselves tremble with love when a friend offers to the dear dead friend a thought or a sigh. Beatrice saw Guido, and sent to

him, though far away, her last farewell. Guido saw her, and in spite of the space which divided them, they kissed each other with their looks.

They kissed each other ! At the foot of the scaffold, or after the extreme unction, even a saint may be kissed by the man who loved her. The last but one kiss of love is not registered in heaven among sins, provided the last be that of death. Even Michel Angelo kissed Vittoria Colonna while she was breathing her last. These affections cannot be comprehended by vulgar minds, but only by those accustomed to unveil themselves to the rays of divinity ; by souls, who in their birth were favored with an intellect of love. And Beatrice, as if he was present, as if his fingers played with the curls of her hair, with a musical voice spoke to her lover these words :

“ Ah ! Guido, my love, be joyful : God will not keep you long to suffer here below. Guido, weep—repent ; every tear will add a feather to your wings to fly to your Creator : one does not fly to heaven but upon wings of grief.”

Father Angelico was astonished, and cursing the evil spirit which resuscitated in her these worldly thoughts, called her loudly by name, and conjured her to keep her mind entirely fixed upon God.

“ Beatrice, expel from your mind every thought which is not heavenly. Do not turn back from the threshold of Eternity to contemplate life.”

And Beatrice, smiling, said :

“ Father, I am a poor sinful girl, and you a holy master of Divinity ; and still I assure you, that I do not commit a sin by thinking of my love. I aspire to a spiritual marriage ; my desire is turned to the connubial bliss of souls. I will marry my Guido in Paradise ; we shall embrace each other in the arms of our Creator. Love is God, and God is Love.”

The good capuchin was not entirely persuaded by such

kind of theology, but he knew it was neither the time nor place for discussion ; he therefore contented himself with admonishing her :

“ Daughter—behold your bridegroom Jesus—fix your eyes on him—him you must kiss with all your soul.”

“ Oh ! yes, with all my soul, because he was all love for us.”

Thus were the condemned brought within the chapel. The time granted for the adoration of the Host, in order that they should experience all the indulgences liberally awarded by the pontiff, having expired, the Brothers of Mercy with the crucifix dressed in mourning came for Bernardino. The poor boy went more dead than alive ; when he arrived at the foot of the step of the scaffold, they ordered him to ascend.

“ Oh God ! Oh God !” he exclaimed in anguish ; “ with how many deaths must I die ? Twice you have promised me life, and twice have you betrayed me. Alas ! what new torture is this ?”

Nor were words able to persuade him to the contrary, for he thought himself lost ; and as soon as he was upon the scaffold, at the sight of the axe, placed upon the block his hair stood on end, and he fainted for the *second* time.

The Brothers of Mercy assisted him with spirits to revive, and when he came to himself, placed him by the side of the block, assuring him that he was not to die ; only to remain there to look upon the execution of his relations !

With the usual ceremonies they went for Lady Lucrezia Petroni. The pious lady observing Beatrice absorbed in deep meditation rose softly, and had almost reached the door before her daughter had noticed her departure. Then Beatrice raising her eyes and seeing her no more, exclaimed :

“ Ah ! mother, why have you abandoned me ?”

Lady Lucrezia, surrounded by the Brothers of Mercy, who concealed the sight of the maiden from her in crossing the threshold of the chapel, answered to the pious question :



"No, I do not abandon you. I only precede you to show you the way."

Lady Lucrezia could ill succeed in ascending the steps ; they ordered her then, and we do not see the reason why, to leave her slippers at the foot of the scaffold ; and she did so : then she mounted as best she could, and finally with fatigue, reached the platform of the scaffold. The executioner removed the veil from her head, and the cloth from her shoulders. The lady, upon seeing her shoulders bare in the presence of so many people, blushed even to the roots of her hair. She stared at the axe, shuddered, and with many tears said :

"Lord, have mercy upon my soul, for now thy judgment comes," and turning to the people, she continued :—"And you, brothers, pray to God for me."

She then asked the executioner what she had to do, and he answered : "Stride over the plank of the block, and lie down upon it." Lucrezia hesitated bashfully to cross her leg over the plank : still at last she fixed herself upon it : a painful impediment she met in stretching herself, since the plank was small and sharp, and she exclaimed :

"Oh ! how hard it is to stretch oneself upon this !"

And these were her last words. Bernardino covered his face with the red mantle. A quick blow made the scaffold resound, and the boy stagger. The head of Lady Lucrezia was severed from her body. The executioner with one hand seized it by the hair, and with the other placed under the severed neck a sponge ; and showing it to the people, cried :

"This is the head of Lady Lucrezia Petroni Cenci."

The body remained stiff ; not so the head, which opened and shut its eyes many times, and many times the muscles of the mouth quivering murmured broken words. Master Alessandro wrapping the head within a black veil, lowered by means of a rope the head and body to the foot of the scaffold. The Brothers



of Mercy arranged the limbs in a coffin, and carried it to St. Celso until justice should be fulfilled.

The work progressed. The executioner and his assistants washed the scaffold and prepared the utensils; the axe was ready, the arm prepared to strike.

The Brothers returned for Beatrice : as soon as she saw them she asked :

“ Did my mother die well ? ”

“ She made a good death,” they replied to her, “ and now she awaits you in heaven.”

“ Be it so.”

When she saw again the crucifix of the brotherhood she sweetly uttered these words, noted down and religiously transmitted to us by a listener :

“ My good Jesus ! if Thou didst shed Thy most precious blood for the redemption of human kind, I trust that one drop may have been also for me. If Thou, most innocent, wast vituperated with so many outrages, and killed with so many torments, why should I grieve to die, I who have so long offended Thee ? Open, through thy infinite mercy, the gates of heaven, or at least send me to a place of salvation.”

An assistant of the executioner approached the noble maiden to bind her hands behind her back ; but she, starting back a step, said to him :

“ There is no need of it.”

Admonished by the monk to suffer yet that last humiliation, with a smiling face she replied :

“ Come then, bind this body to corruption ; but hasten to loosen my soul to immortality.”

Going out into the open air she found upon the threshold seven maidens dressed in white, who waited to accompany her. These no one sent. Having heard that Beatrice had left in her will all her dowry in favor of the daughters of the Roman poor

people, they had spontaneously moved to give her this last proof of gratitude. The officers wanted to dismiss them, but they were obstinate and would follow her. Then a crier drew a paper from his pocket, and read with a loud voice :

“By order of the most illustrious Monsignore Ferdinando Taverna, governor of Rome :—Be it known to all present, that whosoever shall, either by words or deeds, attempt to place any obstacle to the great justice, which is to be executed against the most wicked Cenci family, shall be punished with three rounds of the lash, or a heavier punishment, at the will of his worship the governor.”

And why had the criers not spoken until then, and had kept themselves hidden ? Malignant frogs, they knew not how to croak but when the heaven was tranquil, and everything around buried in silence.

The girls having heard the decree, stood more firmly than before, observing :

“We do not come to prevent, but to console ; if we commit a crime they may punish us.”

“Be kind ! do not take away from me nor from them this sorrowful consolation,” said Beatrice ; and the Brothers of Mercy took upon themselves the responsibility of granting it.

They all marched on together. Beatrice began to chant with a sonorous voice the litany of the Blessed Virgin ; and the girls answered very devoutly : *Ora pro nobis*.

Behold her at the foot of the scaffold. Without cowardice as without boldness she turned to the girls, kissed them, and she spake :

“Sisters : may God reward you for this charity shown to me, for I cannot. I left you my dowry, but it is not worth your thanks ; because, you see, at the bridal to which I am going, the Bridegroom is contented with only a contrite and humble heart. I would wish to leave you the years which I ought to

have lived, to add them to yours ; and more, the happiness which I ought to have enjoyed. May love be to you a source of love, as it was for me one of bitter affliction. You will become mothers : love your children, and let them be the crown of your life. I recommend to you my memory : hold it dear ; and when any one shall question you of me, tell them with honest face : " BEATRICE CENCI DIED INNOCENT "—innocent by that omnipotent God, in whose presence I am about to appear ; certainly not spotless of sin, for who is without sin before the Lord ? but most innocent of the crime for which I am condemned to death. Judges have condemned me, historians will write of the crime of which I am accused, as of a doubtful thing : but through your mercy the recollection of my innocence will remain unblotted from the mind of the people. When injustice shall have finished her reign, which is short, eternal pity will erase the mark of infamy stamped upon my name, and at my fate shall sigh many maidens who shall live on this earth beautiful and unhappy. Farewell."

Jacob's dream is now being acted before the eyes of the Roman people. An angel ascends upon a ladder to heaven. To those distant, at first appeared her veiled head, then her shoulders, then her body ; now she has gained the scaffold.

" You have promised to touch me only with the iron," she said to the executioner : " you at least should keep your promise, and teach me what I ought to do."

And he told her.

Bernardino still kept his face covered by the red mantle : she approached him cautiously and quietly, and impressed a soft kiss upon his hair. A shudder ran through the bones of the little boy, who, having removed his cloak, looked, and saw the most beautiful face of the dear innocent girl.

And he fainted for the *third* time.

Beatrice swiftly crossed the board, and stretched herself upon

the block. The softness of this act, which Love embellished with his modest graces, touched even the heart of the executioner, who thinking of his own daughter, hesitated to destroy that lovely form ; she, perceiving some delay, ordered :

“ Strike.”

The arm fell. All shut their eyes ; and the air around resounded with only one heartrending and one long cry.

The severed head did not stir a fibre : there remained fixed upon it the smile with which she died, flattered by the visions of a better life ; the body on the contrary contracted, and struggled convulsively : finally it was still.

The executioner stretched his trembling hand to take the head, to show it to the people ; but Father Angelino and the Comforters prevented him : one of them placed over it a crown of roses, and, after having wrapped it in a white veil, cried to the people :

“ This is the head of Beatrice Cenci, a Roman maiden !”

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Guido, after having used every means to stop the frightened horse, had recourse to the last expedient. He let loose the reins, and, stretching himself along the neck, with both his hands stopped his smoking nostrils. The colt, thus deprived of respiration, stopped ; Guido humored him a while, then suddenly pulling his bit to the left, and spurring him to the right, turned him back in the road, and galloping furiously returned to the square of the castle.

He reached it at the moment in which the comforter, lifting the head of Beatrice, was crying : “ This is the head of Beatrice Cenci, a Roman maiden !”

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The Brothers of Mercy after having arranged this body also within the bier, carried it to St. Celso. Here taking the crown from her head, they girded it around her neck. The wound which separated the head from the neck, was thus hidden by that fresh and fragrant crown of roses gathered in the morning ; one appeared more red than roses usually are—it was tinged with blood.

The Brothers, worn out by fatigue and pity, took a little rest. the scaffold was cleaned ; the instruments again prepared. The mouth of the grave never says, “enough.” The execution awaits its third victim.

Ought my history to sadden its last pages by narrating a slaughter which surpasses in horror the most savage imagination ? I will narrate it ; because such cruelties still exist in several parts of Europe, which boasts of civilization : and it is not many years ago that we heard of their being practised. Certainly he who suffered them was guilty ; but the death of the criminal ought to be enough for the vengeance of the law, and the example of men. The cruelty which goes beyond the end of punishment, avails only to awaken in favor of the criminal that pity which ought to be reserved only for the unfortunate.

The Brothers of Mercy, after taking some rest, went for Don Giacomo. Lacerated, dripping with blood, tortured by painful wounds, which we cannot imagine, much less describe—oh ! he truly desired death, as the thirsty deer longs for the fountain of water. He went with hasty steps, covered by the tunic and hat of the Brotherhood of Mercy ; ascended quickly the fatal steps ; they removed his tunic and hat, and his shoulders were bare as far as the waist, displaying his shocking wounds. It seemed unnatural to those who saw him that he should preserve in that state, not only life, but his senses and speech. He approached Bernardino, who had revived again, his teeth chattering convulsively and staring vacantly with his eyes,

unmindful of what they saw. The boy would indeed have given great cause for tears, but tears were exhausted in Giacomo, he had already shed them all ; now there remained nothing for him to shed but his blood, and only a little of this. He placed his hand upon the head of his brother, and, turning it towards Banchi, with loud voice exclaimed :

“I protest for the last time, that my brother, Don Bernardino, is entirely innocent of crime ; and if he did confess otherwise, he did it by force of tortures. Pray for me.”

The executioner fastened his legs to a ring fixed in the platform ; bandaged his eyes, and taking a leaden hammer struck with all his might against his left temple. He dropped at once like an ox by the butcher. The executioner gave six other blows upon the breast and back of the prostrate man. The bones cracked, breaking ; blood, pieces of flesh, fragments of ribs fly around ; then the executioner leant down, and placed the club under his neck, one foot on his forehead, one knee upon his chest, and cut open his stomach ; then thrusting in his arm even to the elbow, drew it back drenched with blood, with the smoking bowels of the executed man in his hand, which he showed to the people, crying :

“This is the heart of Giacomo Cenci.”

And then he threw it aside ; then with an axe he quartered him. A sprinkle of that sea of blood, which inundated the scaffold, and dripped through it on every side, fell upon the face of Bernardino, and that warm drop gave him senses enough to comprehend the savage slaughter of his brother.

And he fainted for the *fourth* time.

The people began to believe him also dead. Having re-conducted him to prison, with great exertions they were at last able to make him revive ; but raving continually, and suffering from a delirious fever. For many days he lay at the point of death, until by the assistance of the most celebrated physicians of



Rome, after many months of dangerous illness he finally recovered.

The people were in doubt then—at the present day they are sure—whether the Pope had condemned to a greater punishment, Bernardino, or his relatives.

The *placet* of Clement declared : Don Bernardino Cenci be pardoned of his life, by commuting the penalty of death into imprisonment for life, and with the condition that he should be present at the execution of his relatives. Pope Clement in his mind, if it is not a great sin against God to call mind the infernal substance capable of such thoughts, thus thought :

“ Either Bernardino at the sight of the butchery dies, and I shall have acquired at the same time the benefit of his death, and the fame of clemency ; or if his fibres shall resist the shock, in that case civil death produces the same effect, as regards the confiscation of property, as the extreme penalty of the law.” Priests in Rome used once to pardon thus.

At four o'clock p.m. the slaughter was ended.

Master Alessandro, surrounded by the horsemen and police, to save himself from the fury of the people, who, according to the old custom of revenging themselves against the stone, and not against the hand that threw it, would have torn him to peices, went back to Corte Savella.

The young Ubaldino Ubaldini, was transported with much care to the house of his sister the beautiful Renza, who was wife of Signor Renzi ; and here, with as much secrecy as it was possible, they strove to cure him ; but the affection of his father, and the zeal of the physicians, were in vain against the furious fever accompanied by the delirium which assailed him. The physicians taking aside Lady Renza, with tears in their eyes gave the poor young man up for lost ; notifying her that if he should live through the night, he would not certainly reach the noon of the next day. In truth, at dawn the next day the

sick man grew worse, and still delirious as he was, he asked for paper and pencil. They gave it to him in order to quiet him, and with the bandage on his eyes, and raving, he sketched the portrait of Beatrice, wonderful to look at for the purity of its outline, and resemblance ; and this was the drawing which coming to the hands of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, served as a model to Guido Reni, to take from it the famous portrait of which we have already spoken.

If any one should doubt the truth of the fact as I have narrated it, I desire him to know that this is not a new nor the only miracle of love. Thirty-one years after the death of Beatrice, Giovanni Gannelli of Gambassi in Tuscany, a sculptor, who had been blind since his twentieth year, formed in clay, the statue of the maiden whom he had loved before losing the sight of his eyes ; which was in everything perfect, and particularly so in resemblance : every one being astonished at it, Giovan-Battista Pallotta, Cardinal of St. Silvestro, wishing to persuade them that this could happen naturally by the power of love, recalled the fact of Ubaldino ; and composed the following lines :

*Giovân, ch' ò cieco, e Lisabetta amò,  
La scolpi nella idea che Amor formò.*

The muse cannot be proud of such verses, but the heart approves them.

Monsignore Taverna having discovered the asylum where Ubaldino had retired, sent some officers to arrest him. In vain they warned them that the poor young man was at the point of death ; the officers insisted upon entering his room. Ubaldino heard them come and recognized them, thanks to the lucid interval, which usually precedes the extinction of life. And turning towards them, with feeble voice said :

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"Tell Governor Taverna that you have found a dead man, who would not change his fate with him."

And falling upon his pillow he gave his soul to God.

It was the custom then in Rome, that the removal of bodies to the church should be done at three different times, according to the rank and condition of the party. The citizens were removed at sunset ; the nobles, priests and professional class one hour after dark ; the Cardinals, Princes and Barons at two hours and a half after dark.

The bodies of Beatrice and Lucrezia, and the miserable relics of Don Giacomo remained exposed until five o'clock at the foot of the colossal statue of St. Paul, raised at the head of the bridge St. Angiolo : thence they were removed first to the Consulate of the Florentines, then to the Church of the Brotherhood of Mercy. At nine o'clock the body of Lady Lucrezia was consigned to Don Lelio her brother, who, according to the desire of the deceased, buried it in the Church of St. Gregory.

The friends of the Cencis' house procured permission to have the limbs of Giacomo entombed in one of the sepulchres, which the cruelty of Count Cenci had prepared for his children.

The seven maidens did not leave Beatrice after she was dead, but conquering natural repugnance, they rendered to her the last offices by washing her carefully, dressing her in fine clothes, sprinkling her with odoriferous perfumes, and spreading fresh flowers over her. They replaced on her head the garland of roses, and girded her neck with another of white which likewise became tinged with the blood of the gentle girl.

From all sides were seen collecting new crowds of girls, dressed in white, to render homage to the unfortunate maid, together with the orphans, and all the orders of the Franciscan friars. Fifty torches surrounded the bier, and so many were the lights set upon the windows of the streets through which the funeral procession passed, so numerous the clouds of flowers scattered

upon the bier, that the common people, in comparing it to that of the *Corpus Domini* procession, said that this surpassed that in having nearly twice as many.

Alternating with sad psalmodes the procession reached Mount Gianicolo at the Church of St. Pietro Montorio, where a tomb was prepared, and there they deposited her. Then they recommenced their chants more sorrowfully, sprinkled with holy water the unhappy body, and with many lamentations gave it the last adieu. But the crowd did not soon leave the church empty; for to those who went out others would succeed, as the Catholics on the Holy Thursday when visiting the Holy Sepulchre; and thus they kept on till midnight.

At this hour the steps which sounded on the pavement of the church became less frequent. The sexton announced that the church was about to be closed, and after a short time, it seeming to him that all had left, he turned the heavy door upon its hinges, and with a strong push he shut it.

This noise reëchoing from nave to nave shook the ancient sepulchres in every corner—then gradually it ceased, and all became silent.

Only one torch remained lighted a few steps from the bier. The lamps, which burnt dimly at long intervals before the altars of the saints, rendered more solemn and fearful the obscurity of the place.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SEPULCHRE.

Ove ripose il tuo capo caduto,  
Che raccolto, e da man pia ricongiunto  
Al virgineo tuo collo, ebbe ghirlanda,  
Simbolo del dolenti anni recisi  
Sul mattin della vita.

ANFOSSI, *Beatrice Cenci*.

A FOOTSTEP is heard, it is repeated. It is the step of a living being, who moves towards the bier. By the light of the torch the aspect of Father Angelico is revealed, as pale as the wax of the torch which burns. For what is the poor friar coming?

He seats himself upon the step of the bier near the chandeliers, embraces his knees, leans his forehead upon them, and thus he remains motionless to weep and pray.

From the remotest corner of the church behold another figure comes forth. His steps are not heard, so softly they pass over the marble of the pavement; but they are lengthened and staggering. The various lamps, hanging down from the vaults of the nave, reflect on more than one side several long shadows upon the walls and floor; so that it seemed that a crowd of people had assembled there, perhaps to accomplish some dark design. But this is only a mere appearance; the shadows move from one person alone—alone, if you except the desperation which accompanies him. This man's breast pants heavily; but he stifles his breath so, that it is hardly heard. He is barefooted; his eyes are staring and gleaming like fire.

He is Guido Guerra. What thought urges him to that place is manifest by the poniard, which he grasps in his hand, the same poniard with which he pierced the throat of the father of Beatrice, executed for parricide—that poniard which, before the axe of the executioner, had cut the thread of her youthful days.

He already touches the hem of the cloth, and is about to lift it.

“I expected you!” said Father Angelico, starting suddenly to his feet, and placing his hands upon his shoulders.

A long time they stood motionless and silent beside the bier of the beheaded girl. Father Angelico broke finally this silence by saying :

“Beatrice commands you to live.—Her last thought, ah ! her last thought was not of God—it was yours. She died happy in the hope of seeing you again in heaven ; this she imposed upon me to say to you, and more, she commanded me to remind you that you have committed heavy sins, which Divine justice cannot forgive you, without long repentance. Do you wish to betray the hope of the loving maiden ? Do you wish, unfortunate man ! to shut to yourself the way of rejoining her in the bosom of God !—Give me this weapon, that I may deposit it within her tomb, and live. Take this instead—it is her hair, which the unhappy one sends to you that you may wear it over your heart—and this image of the Madonna before which she prayed her last prayers, in order that you also might pray before her, and through her mercy obtain that pardon, which your bride Beatrice is now begging before the throne of God. Now, go, my son, go :—do not disturb the peace of the dead—Beatrice is not here. Raise your eyes to heaven, and there you will see her again.”

The hand of Guido opened, and let the poniard fall. He took the hair, and placed it in his bosom, he took the image also, and bowing his head wept bitterly.



The friar, gradually forcing with him the desolate lover, took him away forever from that bier.

Guido moved slowly, and unconsciously approached the door of the church. The friar opened it, and going out into the open air with Guido began to quiet him with consoling words ; but he, maddened, suddenly rushed away from him, and silently wandered through the country, where the oblique rays of the setting moon rendered the shadows more frightful.

Tradition narrates, that with the rising of the sun his madness agitated his breast a thousandfold, and he cursed the hour in which he was prevented from accomplishing his design : and since he had been forbidden to pour out his blood upon the tomb of the beloved girl, he swore to propitiate her shadow with the blood of others : miserable vow, which he kept too well ! Making himself the head of a band, he became terrible, not only in the Roman *campagna*, but with subtle skill he plotted against and took several lives in Rome itself, in the very midst of guards, and even within the security of domestic walls.

In 1605 Pope Clement VIII. died, and succeeding to him, after the very short pontificate of Leo XI, Cardinal Cammillo Borghese under the name of Paolo V. a partaker in the spoils of the Cenci house, and supposed also by Guido to be an accomplice in the slaughter ; he warned him to make his will, because in one way or another he should die by his hands. And, as if this were not enough, to put greater terror into the mind of the pontiff, there was also added the prophecy of a certain astrologer, who foretold him a very short life. So that the Pope, dismissing his cook and steward, kept shut up in the Vatican, not daring to appear in public ; or if ever he went out, armed servants surrounded him before and behind. If any one presented a paper or address to him, under the suspicion that they might be poisoned, he would let them fall to the ground.\*

\* PAOLO SARPI. *History of the Council of Trent.*

One day Guido, looking at the hair of Beatrice, felt ashamed of this degraded life which he was leading ; and aspiring to a greater revenge, suddenly went from Rome to Flanders where war was still raging, which its people maintained for independence and liberty. But he arrived too late ; for the war was drawing to a close, and after his arrival nothing of consequence occurred, so that in a short time he found, with inexpressible grief to himself, that he only came to be present at the peace. Then he turned to look upon his past life, and he considered that all his steps had ever dragged him away from that path which the maiden of his heart before dying had recommended to him. Nor was a letter of small use in changing his mind, which his old mother, called by Providence to a better life, had written him, who conjured him, in atonement for the bitterness with which he had saddened her maternal heart, to render himself to God and obtain pardon for his sins. Listening to these voices of his conscience, he thought it not well to loiter in a cloister drowning his thoughts in corpulence and idleness ; but still hoping to appease Divine mercy, he retired to the Alp of St. Bernard, where for the indefatigable care, and wonderful courage shown in placing himself in the fiercest dangers for the safety of the unhappy ones buried by the avalanches, he came into repute for his piety, as well as courage ; and we may hope that appeased justice may have granted him to see again her, whom he loved so well, in the dwellings of the just.

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Where does the body of Beatrice now rest ? From the Church of St Pietro in Montorio the Transfiguration of Raphael has disappeared, and with it the tomb-stone of the betrayed girl. The picture of the Transfiguration, however, placed in a worthier situation, still receives the homage of posterity ; whilst the

devout pilgrim searches in vain for the sepulchre of Beatrice. The monks, like the good son of Noah, ready to cover the shame of the Court of the Popes, have turned the stone upside down, and the inscription has disappeared. Poor monks! A far thicker mantle is required to hide the wicked and detestable sins of avaricious Babylon; nor can records be cancelled like lives and marbles. Let the pilgrim, whom love may urge, go to St. Pietro in Montorio; stop before the greater altar behind the balustrade. There, on the right side, at the foot of the steps of the altar, let him look upon the flat broad stone of *pentelic* marble, which makes an angle with the lateral stones: underneath this sleep in peace the bones of Beatrice Cenci, *a maiden of sixteen, condemned by Clement VIII., Vicar of Christ, to an ignominious death, for parricide not committed.*

This will be enough to enable the devout pilgrim to recognize the place where the maiden lies; but if not sufficient, let him look closer, and he will read upon the stone the following epitaph, which, substituted by the hand of God for that which men had carved on it, will never be erased, even in the consummation of ages:

"THE AVARICIOUS CRUELTY OF PRIESTS HAS DRUNK THE BLOOD AND DEVOURED THE PROPERTY OF THE BETRAYED ONE WHO LIES UNDERNEATH."

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The following Tuesday, which was the 14th of September, 1599, the Brotherhood of St. Marcello, enjoying the privilege of freeing one prisoner on the festivity of Santa Croce, obtained permission that Don Bernardino Cenci should be restored to liberty, on condition, that within one year after he should pay twenty-five thousand ducats to the Brotherhood of the most Holy Trinity of Ponte Sisto. How Bernardino, despoiled of all

his property, would be able to pay these twenty-five thousand ducats, could not be clearly understood ; but the still greedy Court, spread a net to endeavor to extract the money from the most noble and powerful relatives which the Cenci house had both in Rome and elsewhere. The fact is, that these twenty-five thousand ducats were never paid ; every day the indignation in the public mind increased in seeing the greater part of the Cenci property grasped by the Aldobrandini family ; the Pope by an act of the 9th of July, 1600, was forced to restore to the children of Don Giacomo the property of several confiscated possessions, as they were under the bond of entail, not however without the compensation of a good amount of money, as is proved in the order sent to Monsignore Taverna to transact this business, in which occur the following words : "*Pro aliqua con-decentiori Camerae pecuniaria summa per eosdem Jacobi filios persolvenda transigas.*" In July, 1601, the same suit still further being pursued, it was necessary to open the jaws of the mastiff and restore all the other plunder, except the immense estate of Casale di Torre Nova, which the Pope had been solicitous to bestow on Giovanfrancesco Aldobrandini, for a pretended payment of ninety-one thousand ducats. After the death of Clement VIII. and Paul V., Luisa Vellia, the courageous widow of Don Giacomo, intent on recovering the stolen property of her children, brought a suit to show the iniquity of this sale ; complaining of it as of a notorious injustice, she asked either the restitution, or the liberty to show the most enormous fraud and perjury of that instrument against Pupissa Aldobrandini, Paolo Borghese, and others mentioned in the address to Gregory XV. I have not been able to find any other records of these litigations ; but the lawsuits between the heirs Cenci, Aldobrandini, and Borghese lasted for centuries ; and it is only about forty years ago, that the Roman tribunals heard again renewed the ancient quarrel between Prince Borghese and Count Bolognetti Cenci.

If it would seem to some, that I have acted unadvisedly in charging the memory of that Pontiff with so much infamy, I request him to consider principally two things : first, that such infamies in the Court of Rome are neither new nor rare ; secondly, that when the gold of the condemned is poured into the coffers of the judge, the latter ought with the clearest proofs to satisfy the people, that he did not make common cause with the executioner.

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